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# THE POWER OF SUGGESTION.

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS.

BY

MRS. IVAR LEVINSOHN.

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116 W. 39th St.,
New York City, N.Y.

Characters:

Mrs. Blackford
Mr. Steve Blackford
Mr. Marvin Blackford
Mable Blackford
Mr. Olsen
Jean Olsen
Nance Obrien
Thora
Stanley
Aunt Clara
Mrs. Cross

SCENE.

Library in the home of the Olsens, in the suburbs of New York. On the left of the room there is a little nook just large enough for a settee. There are several cushions on the settee and nook is partly hidden by heavy draperies. On the right is a door leading to other rooms, To the north are glass folding doors leading to porch. The room is richly furnished and im good taste. As curtain rises, Stanley the butler enters, places several letter, magazines, and neswpapers on table, then yawns, yawns again,

Stanley:-- I'm going to get a couple of winks right now. (He sits down in large armchair, stretches his limbs, is just about comfortable, when Mr. O. enters,

Mr.O:-- Good morning, Stanley.

Stanley:-- (startled, rises quickly) Good morning Sir. (Mr. O. walks to table, Glances at mail.

Mr.O:-- (In tone of disappointment) None from Miss Jean.

Stanley:-- No Sir.

Mr.O:-- Stanley, I am afraid something's wrong.

Stanley:-- You mean with--Miss Jean, Sir?

Mr.O:-- Yes Its nearly a three week now since the last letter.

Stanley:-- I think your mistaken, Sir, it can't be as long as that, I--

Mr.O.:-- Now wait a minute, Ive got the letter right here(He takes letter from his pocket, opens it reads) Sept. 15 (He looks up) Todays the 27th

Stanley:-- That makes ~~twenty~~ twelve days.

Mr.O.:-- Yes, thats right, it seemed much longer to me.

Stanley:-- Naturally, every day seems like a year to us all since she's

gone. (Mr.O. is glancing over the letter)

Mr.O:-- (Reads loud) I'm so dreadfully lonesome for you, Daddy dear, (He looks up) if she were so dreadfully lonesome she would come home, wouldn't she? That is, if everything were all right.

Stanley:-- Everything is all right, Sir, If it weren't you would hear it soon enough, you know bad news travels quickly. There's really nothing to worry about. You know Mrs. Jensen is a fine chaperone, and not so long ago your mother wrote that Miss Jean is a perfect specimen of good health.

Mr.O:-- That's all very good and true but why in thunder don't shs write the same as she did the first few months? We received mail twice a week regularly, didn't we?

Stanley:-- Yes Sir, But when girls are away from home having a good time you cannot blame them if they forget to write--- And then sir, she might be on her way home.

Mr.O:-- Perhaps not, perhaps she'd want to take you by surprise. It's just like her to do that.

Mr.O:-- (Looks up quickly) Your right <u>there</u> Stanley, she might stop to think--no-- I don't think she would, she'd want to see her Dad and her aunt Clara even before the boat docked. Well (he sighs) one thing is certain, the <u>next</u> time she takes a notion to see the world the world will have gone around to ssee her, she'll never leave this house again unless I'm with her, and My own United States are pleasing enough to my eyes

Stanley:-- Yous seem to forget, Sir, that Miss jean will some day marry and------

Mr.O:-- (startled) What made you say that, Stamley? You know--

Stanley:--Yes, I know that Miss Jean is a very charming almost bewitching young lady and not at all cut out to be an old maid.

Mr.O:-- (nervously) She--she-- it's a long time before she'll be an old maid,--I------(Enter Mrs. Coby, Mr.Olsens twin sister)

Mrs. C:-- Good morning Albert.

Mr.O :-- Good morning, Clara, You look as though you've had no sleep. (Exit Stanley)

Mrs. C:-- Well--I had very little I can tell you I have been sitting on the porch since six this morning.

Mr.O:-- A very foolish thing to do, it was pretty damp this morning I know, I was up pretty early myself.

Mrs.C:-- (sighs) For the same reason, I suppose.

Mr.O-- You suppose I'm sure! Well, you started it.

Mrs. C:-- Started what?

Mr.O:-- That jean must see things that she must really go abroad.

Mrs C. :--Of course she should, no girl is really finished until she has gone abroad.

Mr.O.:-- I think that it is you and I that will be finished before she gets back!

Mrs.C:-- Well of course it was a little bit--But then it wasn't either Mother wrote and fairly begged you to come with Jean, but you hate to be seasick, and I---was laid up with--rheumitism at the time.

Mr.O:-- And I suppose she would have waited untill you got well.

Mrs,:-- You know she had her little heart set on going just that time

Mr.O:-- Of course she did but she's spoiled and willful.

Mrs.C:-- Is that so? Well let me tell you that she's as perfect a child as I would want my own to be, if God had Blessed me with--one You don't deserve her, really you don't.

Mr.O:-- Well, whers the rest of it? You forgot to add that I'm altogether too strict with her.

Mrs.C:-- Well, there's a lot of truth in that, Weren't there many times when you let her cry real hard tears, before you let her have what she wanted?

Mr.O:-- She cried for the moon once, Didn't she?

Mrs.C:-- Well Lord knows it didn't annoy you any.You didn't make the slightest effort to give it to her did you?

Mr.O:-- No, but <u>you</u> did. If I remember correctly you got some silver paper and cut out a crescent shaped moon, then you stuck it up on the nursery window.

Mrs.C:-- (smiles) I remember it as if it were yesterday.

Mr.O:-- Yes, and do you remember also that in trying to reach the top of the window where Jean said the moon always peeks in, you happened to make a misstep, down you came with a crash! You almost broke your neck then, didn't you?

Mrs.C:-- Yes, that was an awful fall, wasn't it?

Mr.O:-- It was, and what was your reward? Jean happened to look up to the sky and see the moon was full Then she was dreadfully annoyed with that little piece of moon up there in the window She wanted that big shiny moon up in the sky. (He laughs)

Mrs.C:-- Well, suppose she did, why, only a fool would try to reason with a baby!

Mr.O:-- How much reasoning does she stand for now? She is no longer a baby.

Mrs.C:-- She has the same right ot her opinios as you have to yours.

Mr.O:-- Thats logic, when she is little you can't expect to reason with her, and when she is grown up you mustn't expect to reason with her. It's my good fortune I wasn't left with three children for you to bring up, I'd have been in the madhouse before they grew up.

Mrs.C:-- Albert, your so inconsistent, now what on earth has that child done to make you talk like that?

Mr.O:-- It isn't what she's done, it's what she hasn't done. Now why hasn't she written a line to either of us in twelve days?

Mrs.C:-- I admit that that is not quite right.

Mr.O:-- Oh, you admit---do you?

Mrs.C:-- yes, and I admit that it worries me a little, but not half as much as----as------

Mr.O:-- As what?

Mrs.C:-- Suppose----Albert----Suppose--Jean should meet some nice young man abroad?

Mr.O:-- I expect she'el meet any number of nice young men abroad---- and for that matter she has met some very nice young men right here. That doesn't worry me at all.

Mrs.C:-- Well it worries me.

Mr.O:-- Why did Jean ever lie to you or did she ever break a promise?

Mrs.C:-- No--- But--did you ever stop to think that we are trying to break a law of nature?

Mr.O:-- We cant help that, can We?

Mrs.C:-- She can't help being a woman,---and you know that Jean is--- a very----womanly---woman

Mr.O:-- yes, and I know too, that she never will break her promise.

Mrs.C:--Albert, when Jean made that promise she knew nothing of love, but you know from your own experience love is a wonderful, bur terrible thing. It makes honest men out of theives and thieves of honest men.

Mr.O:-- (Looking straight into Sister's eyes) Clara, you know something, what is ti?

Mrs.C:--On my word of honor, Albert, I know nothing more now than I did the day she left, but since she's gone I've had a lot of time to think. I've placed myself in her position when I was her age. Suppose our parents had extracted a promise from me, that I would never marry, and then John came along, Why I wouldn't give him up if I had made a promise to God himself.

Mr.O:-- That means you think I ought to tell her.

Mrs.C:--I'm afraid so.

Mr.9:-- But why jump out of a window, and dislocate all my joints, perhaps break a limb when the fire hasn't really started?

Mrs.C:--If you wait until the fire is close to your face you wo'nt be able to jump, it will stagger you, you will fall back into the flames.

Mr.O:-- Now what do you maan by that?

Mrs.C:--I mean, when she is in love, Nothing----nothing-----on earth-- not even the truth will stop her. She will marry in spite of it all, the same as you did. But if she knows, before such a thing happens, she may not allow herself to---- Well she'll at least have the chance to think the thing over, before it's too late.

Mr.O:-- Clara, I can't agrre with you.Why spoil her life when there may

be no reason for it all, You know she'll never accept a proposal until she has consulted either you or I

Mrs.C:-- I wouldn't be so sure of that if I were you. All things seem fair in love and war, and of course it is love first and war after. If it were war first there would be no divorces and less marriages (she puts hand on brothers shoulder)but it isn't, dear, you know how love comes stealing into your heart, and unless we set the alarm we will be robbed.

Mr.O:-- What an antidote you are for a blue morning.

Mrs.C:-- It can't be helped, dear, do you think I came in just to spoil your day? Why I've been thinking this over and over, and tried so hard to find the brighter side of it, but what's the use of using smelling salts for a bad stomach? It will revive you for a moment but it wont cure. Castor oil is pretty nasty to take but it cures.

Mr.O:-- Clara, twins are suppose to be alike, you know, I'm beginning perhaps we're not twins at all.

Mrs.C:-- In shocked tone) Why Albert, how can you say such a thing?

Mr.O:-- Well, I can't help thinking, we were always so different, even as children, you howled when you saw the rod, I waited till iI felt it, and then didn't make the fuss you did, and I always got twice ahe amount of lashes.

Mrs.C:-- Your insinuating, (she snivels) that it wouldn't hurt me half as much as it would you, if it really did happen.(she dries a tear) How can you be so cruel when you know that I love her just as much as you do.

Mr.O:-- There it's just as I said, your crying forno reason whatever, and I'm almost sure your worrying yourself and me to death for the same reason Come now, Sis, be sensible, leave this thing

entireley to me and we'll comeout all right.

Mrs.C:-- And perhaps all wrong.

Mr.O:-- (Impatiently) There you go again.

Mrs.C:-- Am I to blame if you just wont see things in the right light? You know right down in your heart, I'm doing what's best for you.

Mr.O:-- You drag out the worst.

Mrs.C:-- You don't mean that, you know you don't, your just trying to make yourself believe---- well we wont talk of that any more--Come back to the house with me, a little walk we freshen up a bit.

Mr.O.:-- Ive got a lot of mail to answer.

Mrs.C:-- You can do that when you get back.

Mr.O:-- I suppose I can.(Mrs.C goes to mirror)

Mrs.C:-- I love the fall of the year. It's the most beautiful of all seasons. But the wind, I don't like the wind, it has a spiteful i litlle way of disarranging my hair.

Mr.O:-- As he presses button) Now that's really too bad, Clara, suppose I send up a wireless, Stop all winds at once. It is a menace to my sisters hair.(Enter Stanley) My hat and coat, please.

Stanley:- Yes Sir. (Exit Stanley)

Mrs.C:-- You can joke about it all you want, so acn other men. They have so litlle hair, some have none at all. (Still busy arranging hair)

Mr.O:-- Well theres just a litlle pair of scissors between you and your troubles. (Enter Stanley, helps Me.O with coat, hands him his cane) Wo't be long if anyone should call or ring.(exit Stanley) Stanley's been to N.Y. Hes got all he can do to keep awake.

Mrs.C:-- (Still arranging hair) You've got more patience with him than you have with me.

Mr.O:-- (Shaking his head) No, Clara, I've been watching you at that

mirrir.---Thats patiece---Say did John ever watch you---I mean, did he stand for that?

Mrs.C:-- Of course he did. He complained a little bit in the beginning but after a while------

Mr.O:-- (Interupts) He got wise, he stopped taking notice.

Mrs.C--- Now that was very rude, entirely uncalled for, (She walks to the door) I can walk back to the house alone.

Mr.O:-- Of course you can, but you wont. (He walks over to her, takes her arm) You can take a little joke once in a while can't you?

Mrs.C:-- I think I can, you know I'm ussually right.

Mrs O:-- Except when you are wrong. (Mrs.C is about to speak, but before she can utter a word Mr.O breaks in, holds up hand) No-- No-- I didn't mean that-----Your right, Sis absolutely--(He leads her from room)----Stanley peaks into room from opposite door, then enters. Yawns.

Stanley:- I hope he takes a good long walk, I need some sleep. (He makes himself comfortable in large armchair, and in a few seconds falls sound asleep. a minutes pause then------Jean peaks in doorway. first at window leading to porch, then at doorway. She tiptoes in, dragging Nance with her, by the hand.

Jean:-- That was luck, wasn't it, Nance?

Nance:-- It wasn't, it was foolish.

Jean:-- Foolish to to give my darling Dad a real surprise?

Nance:-- Well, you had him there, why didn't you surprise him instead of sneaking around the side of the house until you were sure he was out of sight?

Jean:-- You don't think I want my dad to make a fool of himself out there in the road, besides, I think it's a much bigger surprise to have him find me right here in the house. ( Stanley snores, both girls look up, Jean sees Stanley in chair, she smiles) come over and

see Stanley, he's an old relic of the family. (She bends down, draws back) Stanley's been to M.E.

Nance:-- How do you know?

Jean:-- Just got a whiff of it. But he's a fine fellow just the same. (she bends down, calls into his ear) Stanley, times up, come b back to earth, (Stanley opens his eyes partly, closes them again and is off to sleep)

Nance:-- (sings) Pleasego 'way and let me sleep.(they laugh)

Jean:-- From the contented look on his face I think he sees a round of drinks coming his way. It's too bad, Stanley youve got to come out of this.(She shakes his arm) Hey there old boy youve got the sun and the stars mixed up it's broad daylight. Come on Stanley, wake up!

Stanley:-- (Yawns) Go away Thora, let me sleep just five minutes more.(He is about to doze off again)

Wake up Stanley, your pipes gone out*------*(PLEASE OMIT)

Jean:-- Wake up, Stanley, your pipes gone out.

Stanley (Hears the voice starts) (looks up sees jean, Jumps up) Good lord, it's Miss Jean! I thught I was dreaming aboutyou----Well---above all---I told your dad you---well I'm not so sure I'm awake now.

Jean:-- YOUR awake, Stanley, Seeing me was like throwing you into a cold bath wasn't it?

Stanley:-- Seeing you is like seeing sunshime after months of rain.It's been terribly dull here since youve left, and the last few days---well it's been like a madhouse with all the patients turned losse

Jean:-- Why, whats been wrong?

Stanley:-- You, Miss Jean, It was very wrong of you to keep us all in such suspense.

Jean (lahghs) (turns to Nance) Did'nt I tell you? It's going to be some surorise.

Nance (looks at Jean steadily) I think you're ~~some~~ (she looks at Stanley)--- I'll say the rest later.

Jean Stanley, this is Mrs O'Brien.She's going to make her home with us.

Stanley I'll be right glad to serve you, Miss O'Brien.

Nance You're English,StanleyC

Stanley Yes,Miss.

Nance (smiles) I'm Irish.

Stanley Well, that proves the Irish have something to be be proud of.

Nance The Irish have everything to be proud of.

Stanley I'll never contradict a lady; but---

Nance But---

Stanley No matter how ready the Irish will be to fight,the English will always be polite.May I attend to your baggage?

Nance (smiles) You may.

Jean You will find our grips underneath the back-porch.Put them all in my room Stanley.

Stanley Yes,Miss Jean.

Voice is heard from within:---Stanley,Stanley,where you bane?

Jean drags Nance to corner of room. Enter Thora,the maid.

Thora (does not see Jean and Nance)---6ou look like you yust vake oop. Stanley tries to attract her attention to the other end of the room,but Thora does not understand him.-----

What's the matter; something been blowed in your eyes?

Stanley [redacted] vile you vas sleepin'?

Stanley No-- but---you're awake and you can't see.

(Jean laughs loud. Stanley goes out. Thora looks up, her mouth and eyes wide open, swallows hard, then draws a deep breath)

Jean — Whats the matter, Thora I can't tell whether your happy or shocked

Thora — I---I--bane so glad, I could yust yump for yoy, but I tink my eyes speak lies to me. (Jean takes Thora's hand, presses it firmly

Jean — Your eyes are all right, Thora, they tell me your really glad. Nance, come and shake hands with Thora, She's really the foundation of this home. If she ever caves in it will mean a bad break for all of us.

Nance — (As she takes Thora's hand) It's right good to see a maid so fond of her mistress.

Jean — And she is going to be just as fond of you. Thora, Miss Nance is going to stay with us.

Thora — I bane hope she stay a long time.

Jean — I can tell you now you can manage to keep her.

Thora — Yust say it, I do it.

Jean — Well, Miss Nance is just crazy about apple pie. And you sure can make them, Oh Boy!

Thora — I bane make apple pie every day for you, Miss Nancy, until you say stop. Now I go call up Mr. Olsen

Jean — What for, Thora?

Thora — I bane tell him you caome home.

Jean — You bane do nothing of the kind (Jean turns to Nance) Lucky thing she said that the surprise came near being all off.

Thora — Oh you bane give your Dad surprise. Dot's nice only may be he give you surprise vot$_a$----vel-----yourdad he bane yust like crazy for you do not write to him.---We vill have apples pie for for dinner.(Exit Thora)

Nance — She's a prize, how do you get the that way?

Jean — We don't, when we get them they are the same as the rest but it doesn't ake us very long.

Nance — Hipnotic influence.

Jean — No-----but we don't let them think there absolutly indispensable we let them feel that we place confidence in them, we let them feel we place enough confidence in them to make them feel human. but not enough to give them the upper hand. If you ever manage servants again, Nance, try that resipy.

Nance — Yes, nieteen yards of patience and King Solomon's patience might, -----It's just luck, Jean, you were born under a lucky star, that iscertain.

Jean — I'm not so sure about that, Nance.

Nance — Good Lord, Jean here I am almost penniless, No one to love, and no one to love me, while you--youv'e got everything.

Jean — (smiles) Yes, but just now Ive got more than is really good for me----A husband.-------

Nance — (in shocked tone) Jean you don't really------

Jean — (smiles) I'm only joking, dear, I love him more than I could ever try to make you understand. But Nance, you don't know my dad.

Nance — All dad's are the same, Jean, lions outside and mice inside. It's up to the little girl to turn him inside out.

Jean — I've done that many times, Nance, but this is very different.

Nance — That means that you can have every thing that you want but---- a husband.

Jean — Exactly---No---I wo'nt say that--we never really got that far, he always talked of the possibility of a proposal.

Nance — (in sarcastic tone) Yes, it <u>is</u> possible for a girl not very bad looking and not deformed to get a proposal once in a while.but most dads hope and wait and even pray for some poor unsuspecting boob to come along and ask for his daughter.

Jean — My dads different, He always prayed the time would never come.

Nance — Why?

Jean — Well, I suppose it's because-------I'm the only one he has.

Nance — That sounds too selfish to be real, Jean have you ever stopped to think that there might be some other reason?

Jean — No I haven't, but it would really be foolish on my part. There are no secrets between Dad and my Aunt Clara, and I, you see,---(Enter, Thora, carrying a large vase in which are some large chrysanthemums,) Oh! aren't they beautiful! Who sent them?

Thora — (smiles) Nobody---I mean I did---I bane get him last two weeks ago.

Jean — (surprised) What? And still so fresh?

Thora — (shaking her head)They bane no live ones. They----what you call 'em---you know--make belief.

Nance — She means artificial ones. (They laugh)

Thora — Dot's him----Dot's him, Arti---Arti-------

Jean — Artificial.

Thora — Ar--Ti---Fi---Cial Yes, I know how you bane like them. I buy dem tree times, and you no bane come home It's no goot dem real ones, It's yust so pretty and dey den be dead So I fool em I buy wot's first dead and den dey be pretty.

Jean — (as she takes artificial flowers from Thora.)They are beautiful Thora, indeed they are, but not nearly as beautiful as the thoght behind them.

Thora — (looks at flowers, not quite understanding)Behind dem? I bane not know dere is somedings behimd dem let me look?

Jean — (smiles) There's nothing you can see Thora, But you can hand me that vase on the bookcase.(Thora walks toward bookcase,peaks out of the window. Turns quickly toward Jean.

Thora — Mr.Olsen, he bane coming, (she grabs vase, hands it to Jean,

Jean quickly places flowers in vase. Thora places vase back on bookcase, Thora runs to door.) It would be fine if you bane hide behind dot curtains. (She points to corner where settee is partly hidden by draperies.) Und veb he come back you yump right out like a little vun rabbits, you know-----(SHe laughs,) He bane so much surprised. (she laughs as she goes out. Jean runs to window.)

Jean — There he is! (She grabs Nance by the hand, is about to drag Nance behind curtains.

Nance — Oh no, you must do this alone. Jean, if you take my advice you'll strike while the iron is hot.

Jean — You mean-----

Nance — I mean tell him, tell him before the surprise wear off. While he's still in the seven heavens looking at his angel child. You can tell him anything under the sun then, it will be perfectly all right. (Shes about to turn to go)

Jean — For heaven's aske Nance, don't leave me, You---You want to see the surprise don't you?

Nance — (Smiles) It's not the surprise your willing to share it's the spanking (She takes Jean into her arms) Now don't be a quitter. Marvin is well worth the battle. If you aim well you can corner your matrimonial enemy. He will throw up his hands and say, "You win" (Nance rushes out, Jean runs behind draperies. Enter Mr.O, takes out watch)

Mr.O. — I think I can write a few letters. (He walks to table, sits down, takes pen and paper, write a few lines) Damn it, I <u>can't</u> write-- (stops to think a few moments) I can't stand the strain of this any longer---I'm goint

to send a cablegram.

Jean — (peaks out) To whom Dad? (Jean quickly withdraws head behind d draperies. Mr.O. jumps up, looks around room.

Mr.O. — I could have sworn I heard------My God! I think this suspense is turning my brain! (He paces up and down room, when he reaches end of room Jean qmickly slips out to other end. Mr.O. turns, sees Jean, She jumps into his arms, His surprise and joy is depicted in his face and attitude. Jean kisses her dad again,again and again, While Mr.O. draws a deep sigh of releif)My little girl My little girl, (He presses her tightly to his breast) It wasn't right dear, to keep your dad and your aunt Clara in such awful suspense.

Jean — I decided to give you a surprise and I did.

Mr.O. — You did, the suspense lasted two weeks, the surprise two minutes.

Jean — Wnat! you don't mean to tell me your over it already.

Mr.O. — (Laughs) Just the same, Kean, going abroard hasn't changed you any.

Jean — On yes dad, I've changed a lot,---I--Oh I've got to tell you, Dad come, letVs sit down. Mr.O. sits down in armchair, Jean sits on his knee.)

Mr.O. — By the way, where's Mrs. Jensen?

Jean — I left her in Stockholm with Grandma.

Mr.O. — (In shocked tone) What, you traveled all the way back unchaperoned?

Jean — Grandma is not very well and she became very fond of Mrs. Jensen I thought it a good plan to leave her---(sees the displeased look on her father's face) and now don't you worry dear, I was very well chaperoned.

Mr.O. — Who was the lady?

Jean — The lady? It wasnt-----

Mr.O. — (shocked) It wasn't a lady?

Jean — Quickly) Oh yes--yes of course. What I maent to say was, it wasn't just a lady, it was --er--a---a--sister!

Mr.O. — What!

Jean — A sister, that's plain english, isn't it?

Mr.O. — It might as well be chinese for all I know of it.

Jean — It's simple enough, The good Lord knew how much I wanted a sister so he put one on the boat for me.

Mr.O. — You don't mean----

Jean — Yes, I brought her, she's-------

Mr.O. — You don't mean to tell me you've picked up some waif?

Jean — In seriuus tone.) Don't say that, Nance is a lady born and bred. and whats more, she's Irish, so don't you start anything. (she presses button)

Mr.O. — I suppose she's got blue eyes and black hair and an Irish brouge. (Enter Stanley)

Jean — Ask Miss O'brien to please come here.

Stanley — Yes, Miss Jean.(Exit Stanley)

Mr.O. — (smiles) Two sisters, Olsen and Obrien.

Jean — Dad, I'm no longer-----(she swallows hard, looks at dad) I---I'm glad she's Irish.

Mr.O. — So am I if she's real.

Jean — Shes resal, Dad, it won't take you long to find that out. (Enter NanceJean goes to meet her, takes her hand, Leads herto dad) This is Nance, Dad, Nance O'Brien.

Mr.O. — (Takes Nance hand, Presses it firmly) I'm very, very glad to have you here, my dear, and I hope we shall succeed in making you feel very much at home.

Nance — Thank you, your very kind. I-----

Jean — (Joyously) Kiss him, Nance, it's all in the family.

Nance — (Kisses Mr.O.)

Mr.O. — I hope you will be vrey happy here with us.

Nance — I'm sure I will.

Mr.O. — Now you can both tell me of some of the things you've seen abroad

Jean — Your fine at explaining scenes and incidents, Nance, come on, let's all sit down on the couch. (Mr.o., Jean and Nance sit on couch?

Mr.O. — Well, start it off.

Nance — Come to think of it Jean, The first incident really worth mention-was your meeting Marvin. That was your little romance so you tell it.(Jean becomes terror-stricken. Nance sees at once that Mr.O. is still ignorant of Jean's marraige)

Mr.O. — Marvin? Who Is Marvin?

Jean — (So nervous that she can hardly speak) Ma----Marvin---is a dog. Ye--yes, a wonderful dog. (Nance tries hard not to laugh)

Mr.O. — A fancy name for a dog. But Nance seems to think this a romantic meeting, the meeting of this dog, So go right ahead, I'm all attention. (Nance tries hard to conceal her amusement)(Jean looks at Nance with an expression of you responsible for this, then looks back at Dad.

Jean — Well, Dad, it was like this----Marvin was lying on a steamer chair---------reading a book----(Nance laughs out loud)

Mr.O. — (Lughing) Marvin is a rather educated dog.

Jean — I've got the whole thing wrong, Imean----the man that sat on the chair before the dog took possession, was reading a book, and he must have dropped it. I came alomg and tripped over it and fell right into the man's lap.------That is, not right into his lap, I sort of fell over the dog fisrt, and well--- He laughed and I lughed------

Mr.O. Who, the dog?

Jean (sarcastically) Dad your not paying the least bit of attention. I didn't say the dog, I said-----(enter Stanley)

Stanley A Mr. Holstein wishes to see you Sir, He says that it's very important. (Mr.O. takes card, reads, Holstien and Barnes, Attorneys at law. He stops to think.) I never heard of them------(a pause) All right Stanley, I'll see him in a minute.(exit Stanley)(Mr.O. turns to Jean. I'll be back in a few minutes to hear the dog's finish. (Mr.O. leaves room)

Nance Looking straight into Jeans eyes) Well of all the story-tellers, on earth-----How did you ever invent that dog story?

Jean (Draws a deep breath) I don't know. When I heard you say Marvin and romance, It's-----I'ts a wonder tha I didn't bring in an elephant.

Nance How was I to know that you didn't tell him? You said you would.

Jean Yes, but, oh Nance, I'm in a dreadful pickle, I just can't pluck up the courage.

Well you'll have to. and within the next ten minutes.---Marvin just rang up a few minutes ago. (Jean staggers)

Jean Ma Marvin?

Nance Yes, Marvin, not the dog.

Jean (smiles) You're trying to scareme

Nance I'm telling you the truth, Jean, he rang up about ten minutes ago. Hehad the sense to ask for MissO'Brien so of course Stanley thinks that he is my friend.

Jean And he said----------

Nance That he'd be out within an hour.

Jean Nance, my heart is going like a triphammer. Sup--supose you tell my Dad.

Nance — What? You signed the conbract, didn't you? When I get foolish enough to sign away my freedom then I'll tell him.

Jean — And you promised to be my sister.

Nance — If I were really your sister, Jean, you'd have nothing ti fear. It's just because your all he's got. But tell him for me, if it's the noise he'll miss I can accomodate him. And as for the bossing, I can do that too. Now buckle up, It's got to be done.

Jean — I wish I had half your dourage.

Nance — I wish I had half your luck.

Jean — I wish you had ~~it~~all

Nance — Including Marvin?

Jean — (smiles) No

Nance — I thought so, you'll------(enter Mr.O.)

Mr.O. — Now, girls, I'm ready for the dog story.

Nance — The dog story really hinges on something important, Mr.Olsen, but ------well it concerns jean so she'll tell you about it. (Nance goes to door, turns, looks at Mr.O.) I can make an awful lot of noise around the house, Mr. Olsen, I can make you do a lot of ~~thin~~ things you don't want to do, and I can try your patience beyond all expectations. Just stop to think of that when Jean tells you -----well----Jean has something very important to tell you, that is all

Mr,O. — You seem to know all about it, Nance why don't you stay?

Nance — After all Mr.Olsen, I'm the fifth wheel in this wagon. (she opens door walks out.

Mr.O. — What does it all mean, Jean?

Jean — Does it ever occur to you that the best girl in the world is sometimes forced to tell a lie?

Mr.O. — (Nervously) Jean, you've somehting to tell me don't beat about the bush. Come, out with it.

Jean I will Dad, but first you must tell me -- the truth, why, don't you want me to marry?

Mr. O. (Closes his eyes depicting great distress) Its come.

Jean What Dad - what's come?

Mr. O. You're in love.

Jean Yes, dad.

Mr. O. (A pause) You just said a girl is forced to tell a lie sometime, - (he looks straight into her eyes) You -- you haven't broken your promise?

Jean I have Dad - I couldn't keep it.

Mr. O. You've never broken a promise before.

Jean I've never been in love before.

Mr. O. To being in love gives a girl the right to become a liar and a hypocrite.

Jean Not unless there's a very good cause, and I had a very good cause. You, Dad and Aunt Clara, you both tried to break a law of Nature, It is only natural for a girl to fall in love and be loved, and be married, isn't it?

Mr. O. There are a lot of unmarried girls that are very happy.

Jean Yes, I suppose there are, a lot of unmarried girls and a few that are happy, but my opinion is, when God made those few, he made them all wrong.

Mr. O. You're only a child Jean, your opinion doesn't count very much. There are lots of old maids, much more to be envied than some wives and mothers.

Jean (Sneers) Old maids, the very sound of the work sickens me.

Mr. O. Jean, lets look into the love affair of yours seriously. Can you ever be happier than you've been here with your Aunt Clara and your Dad?

Jean I was very happy here, but that's past now, I don't mean quite that. I love you both justthe same as ever, but -- its different Dad, very different. If I had to choose between you both, and the man I love, I -- I -- would choose my love.

Mr. O. (Looks at Jean, shakes his head sadly) But -- but -- you have no -- choice -- Jean.

Jean I have no choice -- why?

Mr. O. That I can't tell you.

Jean You know my nature Dad, you could always bend my will to the trifles, but when it came to big things you never won out, and you never will.

Mr. O. In this case Jean, I will, I must win out.

Jean Dad you married for love, didn't you?

Mr. O. Yes.

Jean Then you know that the key that cannot open the door to lovers, has yet to be insented.

Mr. O. Yes, -- and I know too, that nine out of ten forbidden marriages prove failures.

Jean Yours didn't.

Mr. O. (Looks at Jean a few moments) I'm not so sure about that.

Jean (Surprised) Why Aunt Clara told me, when you married my mother, her heart and her soul was as white as lily's and her face was as beautiful.

Mr. O. She told you the truth, but -- (he stops to think) Jean dear, I'd give up the remainder of my life if I could alter the situation, and give you the happiness your entitled to, but it can't be little girl (he heaves a deep sigh) It can't be, you must give him up.

Jean (Shakes her head) I can't dad.

Mr. O. You can, you've broken your promise to your Dad, you can break your promise to your lover.

Jean I could break my promise to you Dad -- but -- but -- its -- its impossible to break a promise -- made at the alter before God.

Mr. O. (Opens his eyes wide, stands motionless, beginning to understand the truth) My God Jean, don't -- tell me -- your married.

Jean I am married Dad.

Mr. O. (Staggers sinks into a chair, clasping his hands tightly in great distress.)

Jean (Kneels before him, places her head in his lap.) I didn't think it would hurt so much Dad. (Silence a few moments.)

Mr. O. (In tone of great distress) How -- long -- have you been married?

Jean (Raises her head looks into her father's face,) Three months Dad.

Mr. O. (Closes his eyes, depicting the deep pain in his heart.) (Silence a few moments, then in a tone betraying the most horrible dread) Jean, ---- Are you? -- (Jean looks at her Dad)

Jean I can see Dad, for some reason you don't want me to become -- a mother -- but -- but -- I --

Mr. O. (Looks at Jean, cried out) Oh my God, (drops his head.)

Jean Dad, your hiding some terrible secret. Its all clear to me now, but its too late to remedy, its done, and if it could be remedied I wouldn't, no matter what the consequences would be, (She rises strokes his head tenderly.) Tell it to me Dad, I'm game, you know I am.

Mr. O. (He sighs) We'll see yow game you can be. (A pause,) Jean do you know where your mother died?

Jean Yes, in Boston in a Sanitarium.

Mr. O. Do you know the cause of her death?

Jean Why -- yes, Aunt Clara told me tomayne poisoning.

Mr. O. (Silence a few moments) Alcoholic poisoning Jean (Jean looks at her Dad as if he had suddenly gone mad)

Jean Alcoholic poisoning?

Mr. O. She was an habitual drunkard, (He drops his head) She died crazed by drink.

Jean (Horrified,) Oh Dad don't -- it can't be -- Oh no, it can't be. You wouldn't have married her if ---

Mr. O. When I married her, she was just what AuntClara told you, as beautiful as a lily with a soul just as white.

Jean Then -- then-- how?

Mr. O. ( A deep sign) Oh I was warned as I warn you now. A relative of your mother was a very dear friend of mine. He told me that your grandfather left Swedan, and came to America, because here no one knew, that his wife's death was caused by drink, the same as all the mothers in that family for generations back.

Jean You heard this before you married, and yet? ----

Mr. O. Yes, -- and not alone that, but my friend wrote to my mother, thinking she could save me, and somehow I got wind of it, that she was on her way over, so I married your mother, before my mother arrived.

Jean (In shocked tone) How could you?

Mr. O. (Smiles sadly) How could I? Why who could have looked into my Leontine's eyes, just once, and believed that such a thing was possible. I just reasoned things out with myself, Surely the others over there, her mother, and her grandmother and the rest of them, must have been very different. My Leontine was an angel -- and I had never seen a drunken angel until I -- saw -- your -- mother -- that way.

Jean God -- how terrible. (A pause )(Then Jean looks up at Dad again,) Aunt Clara told me mother loved you so much.

Mr. O. She did --

Jean Love makes great sacrifices Dad. If she had truly loved, as I do she would have conquered.

Mr. O. I thought that once Jean, but I soon learned, that the little God of love stands no chance with that Devil called inheritance.

Jean The little God of love has conquered kings.

Mr. O. Yes, that's true, women have conquered kings by looking at them , but you can't look at inheritance, that devil's inside. What chance has a heart with the blood of a devil pumping into it?

Jean Dad a good, back bone, will sometimes cure bad blood.

Mr. O. (Sighs) That my dear your mother had very little of. She was as weak and as submissive as she was lovely.

Jean — And Grandma -- I mean your mother, when she came, could she do nothing?

Mr. O. — When your grandmother arrived, my wife showed no signs whatever. Mother was just beginning to think that I was right, that my Leontine was different, that she fooled inheritance as sometimes it really does, but then she was suddenly stricken with - pneumonia, that was about three months after we were married, The doctors insisted on whiskey. They said my wife's life depended on it. She got it, - - from that time on -- (He lowers his head sighs)

Jean — Well, if that's the case, I think I was sent into the world to fool inheritance. I was laid up with a very bad cold in the steamer coming back. Marvin insisted I would take whiskey with my quinine, and when Marvin decided your going to do something you'll do it, so I took it, and a pretty good dose of it to. In a little while I saw three husbands instead of one, and all three seemed to be standing on their heads. Well, the next day my cold was very much better, but not entirely cured, so Marvin insisted on a second dose. I took it, knowing the first one did me a lot of good, but I never tasted it after that. The bottle was right there in my room.

Mr. O. — That does sound encouraging Jean. Suppose after all --- your quite sure you ---- ?

Jean — Why of course, I haven't had the slightest desire for it -- I haven't even given it a thought.

Mr. O. — Perhaps the time hasn't come yet.

Jean — Well, if the time ever does come that devil, as you call him, will have a pretty tough job of it. He'll find it wont be an easy matter

to penetrate this back bone. Now you take my advice Dad, go take a little nap, you look like the wreck of the hesperus.

Mr. O. You know I can never sleep in the day time.

Jean Well then the rest will do you good. (She kisses Dad tenderly) Now dearie Dad, do as I tell you, and don't worry anymore, everything is going to come out alright, you'll see. (Mr. O. goes to door, turns back.)

Mr. O. Shall I ring Aunt Clara?

Jean Certainly not. She's going to be surprised the same as you were.

Mr. O. When she sees you, your the one that's going to be surprised, your going to hear something you never heard before.

Jean Don't make me laugh Dad, but she never means a word of it, we know that Dad, don't we?

Mr. O. (Smiles) I think we do, Well --- you'll see . (He walks out.)

Jean Poor Dad, he's been through hell on earth, and now he's like the sheep that's been shorn to the flesh. He shivers for his lamb, but the lamb's going to put up a fight like a lion, (She stops to think a few moments.) There are two ways, one to avoid having the slightest drop of liquor around, the other to have plenty of it staring me square in the face, and see -- ( She goes to celerette takes out bottle, looks at it, takes cork from bottle, smells to it.) Well, I really don't think I'll ever go mad about this. (A pause,) I'm going to try a drink, If inheritance has any grip on me at all, then there's my chance to show that devil he can't always have just what he wants. We'll see (She's about to ring bell) No its best to keep Stanley out of this, I'll take it out of the bottle. (She raises bottle to lips, but her hand trembles, her actions depict fear. )I -- I'm afraid the

experimant is too dangerous - (She stares at bottle ) Am I a coward or am I using common sense, I can' t tell which it is - I wont be a coward. (She raises bottle to lips with unsteady hand, is about take some as Nance enters.)

Nance (Laughs) Well Jean what's the big idea?

Jean I -- I -- thought it was a big idea Nance, but I'm glad you came in, it was sort of an experiment that --

Nance With the bottle?

Jean Yes.

Nance (Looking at bottle ) It would be quite an experience if you fin ished that.

Jean Nance, a few moments ago I was sure I had a back bone, but -- now somehow I feel -- Oh Nance, your so much cleverer than I, you must help me.

Nance The best way I can help you now is to take away that bottle, or your husband will think he was trapped into marrying a woman that drinks. (At these words Jean's eyes open wide. Nance takes bottle from Jean places it back into the celerette.)

Jean Is -- Is -- he?

Nance Yes, he's here. I told him you were taking a nap. I wanted to see how the land lays. Your Dad knows?

Jean Yes.

Nance Your in trouble Jean, but there's no time for questions now. Use your back bone, When he's gone we'll talk things over, we'll find some way out of whatever it is.

Jean Why he's isn't going back, you know that.

Nance Of course I know Marvin isn't going back. Its his brother I'm talking about.

Jean (surprised) His brother, is he here?

Nance Yes, they're both out there waiting, come now, powder your nose, (She hands Jean her powder puff, and adjusts a few stray hairs for her) I suppose he couldn't wait to let his brother see his wonderful wife, so for heaven's sake don't make too much of a liar out of your husband.

Jean God made a wonderful woman when he made you, Nance (She sighs) why couldn't he save the pattern until I was born.

Nance Its a good thing he didn't you'd have been out of luck of he did. Come on now, there's a look of cowardice in your face, throw it off, I hate it, and so do you.

Jean Your right (she straightens up) Anything but a coward, I wont be that -- I wont --

Nance Now your talking sense, keep up the the spirit, you'll come out alright. (She goes to door) I'll send them in now, (She puts up her finger) smile, or you'll spoil the picture. (She runs out)

Jean (Stands still, listens, hears Marvin's voice, ~~from within~~)

Marvin (From within) Yes fine roads, couldn't be better.

Jean (Jean sighs, expectant happiness in her face, Enter Nance followed by Marvin and Stephen Blackford. Jean runs into Marvin's arms a long affectionate embrace, Steve looks at them both, then looks over at Nance.

Steve (Awkwardly, to Nance) Do they all get that way? (Marvin then reminded Jean and Steve were not introduced, quickly releases Jean.

Marvin I beg your pardon, I -- I -- er almost, well I suppose you both understand -- Jean this is my brother Stephen. (Steve goes over to Jean, takes her hand, then puts his arm around her, kisses her, looks over at Marvin )

Steve (Smiles, a brothers privilege. Then looks straight into Jean's eyes) You'll be very happy, you couldn't be anything else with Marvin for a husband, When God made him, he made a good job of it.

Jean Indeed he did ( Marvin) I suppose you introduced Nance?

Marvin I did.

Steve I don't know, I've never been in love, and don't expect to marry.

Nance Why are there no sensible girls in your set?

Steve There are lots of them, that's why I'm still single, but I have no regrets. I've got a sweetheart, the best a man ever had.

Marvin Steve calls his mother sweetheart.

Nance Oh I see.

Jean Some fine day Miss right will come along, then your mother will come into her own.

Steve I don't quite get that --- mother -- will -- come -- into -- her own.

Jean Why don't you see her son doesn't marry, she's cheated out a daughter, and perhaps a half a dozen grandchildren.

Steve Circumstances alter cases Jean, I think its a son's duty to look after his widowed mother and sister.

Marvin Sister will marry some day we hope.

Steve That would leave mother entirely alone, now I'm not reproaching you Marvin, on the contrary, perhaps if I had met a lovely girl like Jean I might have -- some one's got to take care of mother and Mable. (He looks at Nance.)I think Miss -- Obrien will agree with me.

Nance - What makes you think I will agree with you?

Steve Well, you've listened attentively and said nothing.

Nance I haven't the right, but if you don't mind my telling you, I --

Steve I'll be glad to hear ----

Nance Well Mr. Blackford, my opinion is this: If God is kind to you and spares your mother to good old age, you'll be -- well -- you've got a little bald spot now, and usually a little awkward corperation goes hand in hand with that, and then you'll watch the years and pretty young woman pass you by. You begin to pine for a litt le love, but all you'll get then is a lot of (They all laugh)

Marvin Its plain your all wrong Steve, its three to one ---

Steve If it were a hundred to one, I'd still insist, that in a case like ours where there are two sons and one marries, the other must make the sacrffice.----

Jean Yes, its his duty to take care of his mother and sister, but -- judging from all appearances he's not quite a Saint. So he'll spend his nights and his money with Julia, Mary and Lucy, instead of spending it with one good woman and a few healthy children.

Nance After all Mr. Blackford has a perfect right to his own opinion. And if he sticke to it, well ------ he might -----( a mischievous smile ) and he might not.

Steve (Looking directly at Nance) If I should have the good fortune to see you often, and you'll smile as you did now, I might ---

Nance (Smiles again) Your mother is quite safe Mr. Blackford, as far as I'm concerned, I'll never be her rival.

Steve (Turns to Marvin) That's the sort of girl that can make any man take, or break a pledge.

Marvin You always were a pretty good judge of characters.

Nance But a very poor judge of nature. Suppose we have a toast to the newly weds.

Steve (Turns to Nance) Now who could suggest a better idea than that?

Jean I could.

Steve I don't think you can, but lets hear it.

Jean Toasts are really -- foolish, we know you wish us the best of everything.

Steve The best of everything on earth oozes out of the neck of a bottle. Miss Obrien you've got the right idea. Bring it in, it really ought to be champagne for such an occasion.

Nance (As she goes to celerette) Its too bad you didn't think of it on your way out, you might have brought some with you.

Steve (Looks at Marvin, smiles) Well --- she's -----

Marvin I wish -- (Nance takes two bottles from celerette, places them on table, presses button. Jean stands looking into space. Marvin looks at Jean) You look so serious Jean, what are you thinking of? (Enter Stanley.)

Nance Some vichy and glasses please.

Stanley Yes Miss, (Exit Stanley)

Steve (Looking at Jean) I think there's going to be a dry law in this house, judging from appearances.

Marvin Why no, Jean never objected to my taking a drink. Of course she doesn't --- (Enter Stanley with tray, vichy and glasses.

Stanley Anything else Miss?

Nance No Stanley. (Exit Stanley) (Steve goes over to table.)

Steve (To Marvin) Yours?

Marvin Whiskey.

Steve Miss Obrien?

Nance Wine please.

Steve Yours, Jean?

Jean Whiskey.

Steve Oh, Ho! Its beginning with sauce for the goose, is sauce for the gander. (He looks at Marvin) Don't worry brother, your safe while I'm around, she doesn't get the same this time. (he looks at Jean, laughs mischievously) Wine for you little lady, (He pours out wine) (Begins passing around filled glasses) Now who'll make the toast.

Nance Why you of course.

Steve Me? I never gave a toast in my life.

Nance There's a beginning to everything. I'll admit its a little bit late in life for you , but better late than never.

Steve Late in life? I'm only three years older than my brother.

Nance You look much older, but that needn't worry you, your sweetheart will always love you, even when your very old.

Steve (Knitting his eyebrows) Are you? -----

Nance I am -- waiting to hear that toast.

Marvin Steve, your going to make that toast, Nance has made up your mind for you.

Steve Well, she suspects I can't make a speech, she wants to enjoy my embarresment. Well, here goes -- (A pause) My dear ---- No, that's not the way I want to begin. (Puts up his finger) Now wait a minute, give me a fair chance and I'll think of something nice. (A pause. Thinks seriously.)

Marvin I'm (looking at glass in his hand) getting a cramp in my hand.

Steve (Seriously) I'm getting one in my head. (Jean in a deep thought. A few seconds elapse) As ever lastingly, as the night follows the day, and the day follows the night, so may happiness follow you both. (Stands erect, turns to Nance) How was that?

Nance Not any better than I expected. (She puts glass to her lips, looks at Jean) (She's still in deep thought) (touches her elbow quickly) (Jean puts glass to her lips) (Marvin and Steve finish contents of glass. They place glasses on tray, Steve looks up at Marvin)

Steve Say, I'm just beginning to think -- She said, not any better than she expected, does that mean? (He looks over at Nance.)

Nance Of course it does, you know a lot more than you give yourself credit for.

Steve Now please don't spoil it all, I was just beginning to believe I met <u>one</u> girl, that had courage enough to say just what she means. ( Nance takes Jean's glass places it on tray. her own)

Marvin I told you Steve, you're a very good judge of characters. (Marvin goes over to Jean, puts arm around her waist. Steve is standing near tray as Nance places glasses on it. She looks up at him and smiles. )

Nance You seem to think a girl can't say what she means unless she says something ugly.

Steve Not just that but, (Marvin kisses Jean, Steve looks up quickly sees it)(To Marvin) Oh use a little common sense won't you?

Marvin I've the right to kiss my own wife haven't I? (Nance smiles)

Steve Yes but there's ------ (Mrs Coby appears in doorway.)

Mrs. C (Her surprise is so great, she staggers, she tries to speak, but can't, she swallows hard two or three times, before she can utter a word.) I --- I --- I'm dreaming --- I -- I - know I am.

Jean No your not Auntie, (She runs over to her, kisses her again and again, leads her into the room.)

Mrs. C. Pinch me, I -- I just can't believe, (Jean kisses her again)

Jean That's the only kind of pinching I would ever give you.

Mrs. C. (Still puffing) Does your Dad know your here?

Jean Yes , he wanted to ring you up immediately, but I wouldn't let him, I wanted to surprise you.

Mrs. C. Did you stop. to think what the shock might have done?

Jean No, all I thought of was the surprise, and now Auntie the surprise isn't complete yet, there's more to come.

Mrs. C. More ?

Jean Yes, a lot more, but just you must shake hands with Nance, Nance Obrien, she's going to make her home with us, and your going to be her Auntie too. (Nance goes over/ to Mrs. C. holds out her hand. Mrs. C. shakes her hand.)

Mrs. C. I'll be glad to be your Auntie, but I do hope you'll be easier to manage, than this little self-willed monkey.

Nance I'll try very hand to please you.

Mrs. C. (Looks at Jean) Did you hear that?

Jean She doesn't know that she can do anything she likes and it will please you.

Mrs. C. (To Nance) She takes advantage of that my dear, don't you.

Nance (Smiles) I wont. (Mrs. C. kisses Nance. Jean goes over to Steve)

Jean Auntie this is Mr. Blackford. He's er -- he's I -- er -- I'm sure you'll like him.

Mrs. C. (As Steve hold's out his hand) Oh I see Nance's sweetheart.

Steve (Flustrated) N -- no -- of course not, I'm -- er -- (Jean quickly interrupts)

Jean He's,he's, Marvin's -- I mean Mr. Blackford's brother.

Mrs. C. I should imagine Mr. Blackford would be Mr. Blackford's brother, but who's Mr. Blackford?

Jean (becoming flustrated, smiles) Yes, of course, your -- your write right Auntie, but er -- ( a seconds pause ) Now Auntie here comes the real surprise. Now be a dear good sensible Auntie, and I'll love you even more than I ever did, if such a thing's possible(she goes over to Marvin takes him by the hand leads him over to Mrs. C.) -- Auntie the only man in the world now stands before you,my -- husband. (Mrs. C. opens her mouth wide, throws up her hands, then falls into Marvin's arms. Steve comes to assist, they carry her over to couch, Nance quickly fills glass with - whiskey hands it to Steve. Steve is about to put it to Mrs. Coby's lips)

Jean Don't give her that Steve, she never takes it.

Steve She isn't taking it. I'm kind enough to give it to her. (He forces some of the whiskey down her throat.)

Jean She doesn't move. My God I've killed her.

Steve She's mery much alive, I think she wants more whiskey. (He forces some more whiskey into her mouth. Mrs. C. begins to cough, tries to speak, but a choking sensation caused by whiskey prevents her from from doing so) Who, (cough) , who(cough) gave me, (cough)

that -- that awful (cough) stuff.

Jean — Mr. Blackford didn't know you can't take it.

Mr. S. — (Cough) Well you know it. Why? (She looks at Marvin, sists up straight stares at him) You -- you -- (she turns her gaze to Jean) My God, Jean what have you done?

Jean — The same as any other sensible girl would do, Marvin is -----

Mrs. C. — Yes I suppose he is --- (She looks at Marvin, then at Nance, then back to Jean. Suddenly a light of new hope is depicted in her face) I see -- I see it all now. Your playing one of your little jokes on your poor old Auntie just to see how I'd take it. You've (she swallows hard) you've seen it now. Come dearie, come say it, don't keep me in this suspense.

Jean — What do you want me to say?

Mrs. C. — That its all a joke ---- of course.

Marvin — Its not a joke Mrs. Coby. Your niece has done me the honor to become my wife.

Mrs. C. — (Hysterically) Oh how could you decieve us so. How could you?

Steve — I think your niece could do a lot worse than marry my brother.

Mrs. C. — I was talking to my niece sir, I hope her marriage to your brother hasn't presented that, so soon.

Steve — (Sarcastically) Not at all - go right ahead and talk.

Mrs. C. — (Sarcastically) Thank you so much for the privilege. (She rises looks at Jean.) Have you told your Dad?

Jean — Yes, He's (enter Mr. C.)(Mrs. C. rushes over to him)

Mrs. C. — (Throws her arms around him) I know what your going to say, Its all my fault, I persuaded you to let her see the world. (Nance walks out of the room) I didn't, its all my fault. (She sobs.) Its terrible, its terrible.

Marvin (To Jean) Terrible? (Jean smiles, takes Marvin's hand, leads him to her father)

Jean My husband, Dad.

Mr. O. (Releases his sister from his embrace, and looks straight into Marvin's eyes, then takes his hand) My dear boy, truthfully speaking, Jean's marriage -- (He bites his lip) Well we wont talk about that anymore, its done. I welcome you as a son, to my heart and to my home. (He shakes Marvin's hand heartily.)

Marvin Thank you. Meet my brother Stephen Blackford. (Steve walks over to Mr. O. They shake hands.)

Mr. O. Right glad to meet you Mr. Blackford. (Mrs. C. looks at brother as if he had gone mad.)

Mrs. C. You act as if it were all agreeee spot, that will come out in the washing.

Mr. O. (To Marvin) My sister raised my little girl. Its pretty hard to give her up so suddenly.

Marvin I understand.

Jean But she <u>hasn't</u> lost anything, on the contrart she's gained a nephew.

Mrs. C. I didn't <u>want</u> a nephew. (She turns to Marvin) I beg your pardon, I didn't mean to be so rude, Mr.--- er --

Jean Marvin, Auntie.

Mrs. C. Mr. Marvin.

Jean <u>Not</u> Mr. Marvin, just Marvin.

Mrs.C. Oh I see, Marvin. I hope you'll forgive me, really I'm on the verge of(she looks back at brother) There's something my brother and I would like to talk about, would you ----

Marvin Certainly, (Marvin, Jean and Steve go to door, Jean turns, blows a kiss from her hand, they walk in.)

Mrs. C. Albert, you must tell her the truth before its too late.

Mr. O. I have told --- and it is too late. (Mrs. Coby's eyes open wide, she stands glaring at her brother)

Mrs. C. You mean she's ---- ?

Mr. O. Yes.

Mrs. C. (Looking at brother a few moments) Then -- then her terrible fate is sealed.

Mr. O. Not necessarily, circumstances alter many cases.

Mrs. C. You didn't seem to think so yesterday.

Mr. O. I didn't know she was married -- yesterday.

Mrs. C. It doesn't alter the situation any to-day.

Mr. O. It does. Jean's argument on the subject is, that enviormemt, strength?, will power, and time, are all great enemies to inheritance, and I think she's quite right.

Mrs. C. Then your willing to hang her fate on those cob web hopes?

Mr. O. The're not cob web hopes Clara, there good substancial ones. Stop to think what a weak, pale little creature Leontine was. Strength and will power were total strangers to her.

Mrs. C. That's very true, but I've seen big strong men succumb to inheritance.

Mr. O. We can do no more that hope, its too late to do anything else.

Mrs. C. We can try and help her.

Mr. O. How?

Mrs. C. By keeping her here with us, we must keep a close watch. You must clean the house of every drop of liquor. She must be kept away from any place that may have the stuff.

Mr. O. That's easier said than done, her husband may object.

Mrs. C. He wont, when he learns the truth. He must be told -- (A pause deep thinking) It must be done, and it will be done. Albert, I'm going to break up my home. I'll come here and live with you.

Mr. O. What! after all these years?

Mrs. C. Yes, I've fought all these years to keep my own home, but Jean's future, her life, is at stake now. What's my home compared to that. We'll begin precaution right now. (She goes over to table,) We'll take all the liquors over to cousin John's. I came here to ask you to ride over with me. Jessie phoned, he's pretty bad this morning.

Mr. O. I had every intension to go and see him today.

Mrs. C. That's a bad sign.

Mr. O. There you go again, you know I dispise superstition.

Mrs. C. But when we get there, and find John either dying or dead you'll say --

Mr. O. (Interrupts) In the name of heaven Clara, can't you think of something pleasant to say.

Mrs. C. O course I can, but facts are facts. You know John's very ill.

Mr. O. Yes, but where there's life, there's always hope, in the sensible mind.

Mrs. C. (Indignantly) That means I (She stops short) (looks at Mr. O. in angry manner, walks to door)

Mr. O. Where are you going?

Mrs. C. I'm going over to John's all by myself.

Mr. O. You're not, I'm going with you.

Mrs. C. Then you'll apologize, before we step out of that door. (Enter Jean)

Mr. O. Alright then, I apologize, I really don't know what for, but I apologize just the same.

Jean (Smiles) Things haven't changed a bit around here, always quarrelling and making up like lover.

Mrs. C. Some day he'll make me so angry there'll be no making up.

Mr. O. (Thoughtlessly) I hope so, (sees his mistake at once) No-- no I didn't mean that, I mean -- I hope such a day will never come.

Jean (Shakes her head) Your so funny, both of you. You agree on all the big things, why can't you agree on the little ones.

Mr. O. We do, agree to disagree.

Mrs. C. You, not I.

Jean (Laughs) There now, don't start it all over again, Marvin doesn't understand you just two wonderful big childred. He'll think your really quarrelling. Mr. Blackford must go back to New York, he wants to say good-by.

Mrs. C. You mean your husband?

Jean Why no, his brother.

Mr. O. Aunt Clara and I are motoring over to cousin's John's. We don't mind going a little bit out of our way.(he turns to Mrs. C.) do we?

Mrs. C. We do, at least I do. There's a lot I want to tell you, and I can't very well when ---

Mr. O. (To Jean) Tell your brother - in-law we'll be glad to take him with us.

Mrs. C. Well of all the -- (Mr. C. Puts his arm around his sister.)There now sis, I know its just because he's Jean's brother-in-law your -- (To Jean) Tell him we're ready.

Jean Your a dear, (she runs out.)

Mr. O. There fine fellow's both of them. Its very unfortunate that ----

(enter Jean, Marvin, Steve and Nance.

Steve Hope I'm not putting you to any inconvenience Mr. Obrien.

Mr. O. Not al all Mr. Blackford. Sister and I were just getting ready to go to Town, and she suggested ---

Steve Very kind of you Mrs. Coby, I'm sure.

Mrs. C. (Looks first at brother then at Steve) I -- er (she looks at brother) Will you take a few of these bottles? (Steve looks at Mrs. C. surprised, then looks at Mr. O.)

Steve (In surprised tone) Some? Wont one do?

Mrs. C. No, we'll take all of them.

Steve You -- you -- don't think I? ----

Mr. O. We're taking them to a sick man.

Steve A sick man? If he takes all this he'll be a dead man.

Mr. O. He's a cronic invlaid, he may live for years.

Steve I see, your in hope he will live a long time.

Mrs. C. (Takes two bottles) You can take what's in the celerette.(Steve goes to celerette takes several bottles, closes the door) We're ready now. (Steve goes over to Jean)

Steve We can't shake hands, but, (Jean understands kisses Steve. Steve holds up bottles) Sweet spirits and sweeter kisses, what can be sweeter. (They all laugh, he goes over to Nance. Stands looking at her, Nance smiles, looks at him a moment then takes bottle out of his right with her left, then hold's out right hand to Steve. Steve looks at Nance smiles, he takes her hand - a pause ) You must meet my sister, I think you'll like her.

Nance Suppose you bring her over the next time you call.

Steve I think Jean and Marvin will come over to see mother. Suppose you bring Miss Obrien.

Marvin If the weather permitts we'll come over to-morrow. We'll be glad to take Nance with us, if she'll come.

Jean Of course she'll come -- I'd -- (she looks at Nance. Nance smiles, hands bottle back to Steve, she smiles. Steve goes over to Marvin)

Steve Good-by old boy until to-morrow. Be sure to come. Mother expects you (in a whisper) I left some for you. (he motions to bottles.)

Mrs. C. (Turns as she reaches door) See that Jean puts her rubbers on if she goes out Marvin. The grass is pretty damp -- be strict with her -- but not too strict, and Nance well -- I think you've got sense enough to put on your rubbers without being told.(Nance smiles, Jean kisses first her Aunt and then her Dad.)

Jean Tell cousin John, we'll be over to him some day during the week.

Mrs. C. Never postpone going to a sick person. He may die before you see him, then you'll never forgive yourself.

Mr. C. There -- she's got him dying again. Come along, Mr. Blackford's in a hurry. (They all walk out, Steve looks back at Nance, walks into chair.)(Then quickly walks out.)

Jean Steve's an ideal fellow.

Marvin I knew you'd like him, everyone does.

Nance Marvin, the girl that will buck up against a mother-in-law who thought she could keep her son single as long as she lives, is taking a desperate chance with her health.

Marvin Mother idolizes Steve, she'd want to see him happy.

Nance Do you know the penalty for stealing an idol? Torture until death. I'm not afraid to die, but when it comes to torture, well -- I'm not quite brave enough for that, besides we're talking a lot of nonsence. Didn't hear him say he'll never marry while his mother lives.

Marvin That's exactly what I said, but the light that lies in the woman's eyes, makes a man lie.

Nance Every woman knows that, but all the mothers who try to keep their sons from marrying, kid themselves not believing that their love is different.

Marvin Nance, when you meet my mother, you'll find her a very sensible woman, I know you'll like her.

Nance Perhaps I will, but if you want her to like me, lets call some day when your quite sure your brother is out. (She goes to door)

Jean Where are you going?

Nance The same place I'd like you to go if I were in your place.

Jean But I've got something to tell you.

Nance It wont boil over till I get back. (she smiles walks out.)

Jean What a wonderful girl Nance is.

Marvin A very wonderful girl, but not as wonderful as my little wife. (he takes her in his arms, looks into her eyes a few moments) and she's going to prove to me that I'm right by --- telling me just what's on her mind, no matter what it may be.

Jean What makes you think -----

Marvin I don't think, I know there's something troubling you. You've heard something or ---

Jean Now don't try to guess, it may force me to tell you a lie. I don't want to do that, your quite right there is something on my mind, that I had fully intended to tell you until a few moments ago, when an idea suddenly came to me, I must be strong, my whole future depends on my own strength and will power.

Marvin But two pair of shoulders can carry more than one.

Jean Not in this case. The very fact that I would ask ~~you~~ for help, even from my own husband, would prove to me that I'm weak (a pause) To think -- Oh please Marvin don't ask me to tell you, its for my good and yours, that I fight this -- (A pause) One thing I will tell you. If I had known what I know now, before we married, I don't -- think -- we would -- have married.

Marvin Then I thank God you didn't know.

Jean (Taking courage through his last remark) Suppose -- Marvin I were to tell you that our family cupboard holds a dreadful skeleton, wo -- would -- you still -- thank God?

Marvin I would.

Jean (A sigh of relief) I'm almost sorry, your so wonderful because -- because (nervously) I might be tempted -- (very nervously) you -- you see dear, I'm not really acquainted with my real self. I'm a little bit spoiled -- I've never -- been put to any test , until -- now -- now we'll have the chance to see whether I'm real -- or -- wax.

Marvin Jean, you've got the wrong idea, Two heads are always wiser than one.

Jean But its not the head I need as much as a back bone. If that should weaken, I'll come to you.

Marvin (Sighs) I -- hope your acting wisely. (He walks over to celerette, opens door, takes out bottle. Jean looks at Marvin steadily, Marvin walks to table, fills a glass) I'm glad Steve left this,(he looks at Jean) You look terribly nervous dear, (he walks over to her with glass in hand) Take a little of this, it will brace you up.

Jean (Looks at glass, shakes head ) No -- dear -- no -- I'll feel better without it, it would only upset me. (Marvin touches her hand ).

Marvin Your cold, its your nerves, come dear, a little bit of this wont do you any harm, I wouldn't ask you to take it, if I thought it would, you know that. (He puts glass to her lips, she closes her lips, is then impelled to breath through nostrils) Come dear take just a sip (She looks at him a moment.)

Jean (Then in decided loud tone) Take it away, I don't want it, I -- (she suddenly realizes she is giving her husband food for thought) (In milder tone) I'm terribly upset dear, and -- (she tries to smile) and really the smell of that stuff sickens me, to such an extent, that -- that -- I wish <u>you</u> could get on without it , I'd clear the house of it entirely.

Marvin I dare say I <u>could</u> get on without it, but --

Jean You'd miss it a little, wouldn't you?

Marvin (As he swallows contents of glass) I <u>think</u> I would, I take very little of it, but, once in a while, when I'm a bit worried or -- (He walks to table places glass on it) Do you think I --

Jean (Smiles) Of course not, I know you'll never take more than you should, its just that <u>I</u> don't like it, and Stanley likes it <u>too</u> well. If -- if we could rid the house of it, we could kill two kids with one stone.

Marvin That's avery foolish idea, don't you know that if you deprive a cat from milk, she'll find a way to get it?

Jean But a man's not a cat.

Marvin He's worse. If he's a drunkard by inheritance, and nine-tenths of them are, I'll wager Stanley's father was adicted to drink, and perhaps his grandfather too.(Jean tries hard to hide the intense suffering this remark causes.

Jean The great pity of it is, that drunkardness prevails mostly among the poor, (she stammers) and -- and the poor are usually, weak, and -- and enlightened, I -- I -- I think that is why there are so few habitual drunkards in the better class. The're strong enough and have enough intelligence to fight( she looks at her husband hoping he will coincide with her idea), inheritance.

Marvin Your wrong dear, neither strength nor intelligence stand a chance with inheritance. Its in the blood, you can't kill it.

Jean (Stands rooted to the spot, thinks for a few moments, sees she must act wisely, she forces a smile) Now you've spoiled all what I thought was a perfectly good plan.

Marvin I'll tell you what I think is a perfectly good plan and should not be spoiled.

Jean (Thinking, paid no attention to her husband's last remark. Marvin looks at her, waiting for an answer) Didn't you hear what I said dear?

Jean Yes -- no, I -- I was thinking, I'm sorry -- what did yousay?

Marvin I said I know of a good plan that should not be spoiled.

Jean What is it?

Marvin That you should lie down and take a good nap, you'll feel much better after it.

Jean I will -- but -- on your way out, dear, find Nance and tell her -- tell her I'd like to see her for a few moments.

Marvin Who said I was going out?

Jean I -- the fresh air will do you good, it will help drive away ---- (she looks up at him and smiles) the little suspicious that are flickering before your eyes.

Marvin You can scarcely blame me, can you? , but -- no -- matter what my suspicions may be, I give you my word nothing -- nothing on earth will make any difference. ( he takes her in his arms kisses her, then gently releases her from his arms) You will take a good nap?

Jean (smiles) I will dear. (Marvin walks out slowly, Jean's eyes follows him until he's out of sight.) (A pause and then in deep thought) If he's a drunkard by inheritance -- he's -- (she closes her eyes -- (enter Nance, looks at Jean.)

Nance What's wrong Jean?

Jean (Tries to hide her predicament) Nothing, that is -- nothing alarming. I -- I -- er

Nance You've quarrelled with your husband.

Jean No -- no -- really I haven't. Its -- well there was something I intended to tell you, but, I've changed my mind, not -- not because -- I don't trust you, but -- but because I'm putting myself through a test. I want to see what I'm made of.

Nance I don't think your going to see what your made of, but a coroner will, you look as if your going to drop dean in a minute. Now the only way you can prevent that is to throw off your chest what you've got on it, and don't be so anxious to know what your made of, its none of your business anyway. Come now be a sensible girl, out with it, not that I'm anxious to pry into your private affairs, but, -- come on now, tell me, an ounce of advice is often worth a pound of gold.

Jean Nance did it ever occur to you when you were a child and even when when you've grown up, that when some one warned you, don't touch-- this-- or don't -- do -- that you would do it, you would touch it, and perhaps if you had never been warned, you never may have done

it. It never may have entered your mind. Now is it just human nature to be willfull or is it, or is it, the suggestion that ----

Nance (Looking at Jean steadily) Your aiming toward the nail, but hitting at the wall. Strike straight if you want good results.

Jean (Looks at Nance) You don't seem to understand Nance that if it were possible -- she stops to think ) -- Nance you've just got to answer my questions and ask me nothing.

Nance Well, perhaps you know best. I'll answer anything you ask, the best I know how.

Jean (Takes a deep breath) Suppose Nance, now -- I say -- just suppose, you were addicted to -- smoking cigerettes, and you decided to break yourself of the habit, would you have them lying around loose or would you ----?

Nance Well -- I -- I don't know, I've never been put through a test of that sort, but I think, if I were'nt strong enough to resist the temptation, just because I was looking at the cigerette, I wouldn't be strong enough to break myself of the habit at all.(Nance is watching Jean closely.))

Jean I think your right Nance I --(She sees Nance is watching her every move) (A pause) Don't stare at me so Nance, I'm determined to fight this thing alone.

Nance (Smiles sarcastically) I suppose you think your judgement is as good as king Solomons and your strength as wonderful as Hercules. The nearest comparison I can make to you, is a fish or a flee. ( a sarcastic laugh ) -- you stab at strength, it just proved how weak you are. Every word that you've said, every move that you made --- well we'll leave that alone for a while, everything perfectly alright until you told your father you were married, then you come

and ask me whether its safe to have cigerettes laying around for one that's trying to break themselves of the smoking habit. (A pause) Its some inheritance your afraid of and its not smoking, or you wouldn't speak of it. (Jean stands perfectly quiet) (Nance goes over to Jean puts hand on her shoulder) What is it Jean, is it insanity?

Jean (Quickly) No -- no -- not that.

Nance Is it some terrible disease?

Jean (Quickly) No -- or yes -- yes -- its a disease.

Nance Its not a disease, you just convinced me of that, Its either (she looks straight into Jean's eyes) drugs or -- drink. (at the word drink Jean takes a deep breath)(Nance smiles,) So that's it -- Drink, that's what your Dad told you. That's why they didn't want you to marry, (Sarcastically) You'll drink yourself to death only after your married. (She laughs heartily,) Say -- I must apologize to the fish and the flee for comparing them to you. (She laughs heartily)

Jean You can laugh because you don't understand.

Nance (Still laughing) Of course not, what do the Irish know about drink?

Jean Your mother's death wasn't caused by drink, was it?

Nance No, I suppose she knew when to stop.

Jean Please, please -- Nance don't -- don't laugh.

Nance Alright then, I'll cry, and lay you out, and say, Its all over, she died because she didn't know when to stop the same as her mother did. That sounds better doesn't it.

Jean (In anger) Stop joking Nance, I can see you don't understand the meaning of it all, you don't realize the dreadful danger ----

Nance I do . I see your in danger of a terrible fate that you don't inherit, and that's insanity. Unless you say to yourself the whole thing is perfectly ridiculous, if my mother and grandmother and all the grandmothers and fathers before them, thought they'd like to drink themselves to death that's no good reason that I should do the same. God gave every human being a brain. Not a piece taken out of the head of your ancestor, but a whole brain, all to yourself, to use -- and use well.

Jean (Sighs a short sigh of relief) Perhaps -- (she sighs again) after all your right. I -- I tried to make myself believe I was strong and only succeeded in proving how weak I really am.

Nance You mean how weak you were,-- you know now your brain wasn't given to you to make mud pies with, your going to make good use of it in the future, and as two brains naturally ought to know more than on, we'll put our two together, and when we're both grandmothers, we'll tell our grandchildren the fairy tale, of a foolish old Daddy and his silly little girl, that tried to chase the sunshine out of their home, so that the clouds could get in. (Jean smiles) --( A pause, ) Marvin told me, you promised you would lie down for a nap.

Jean (A sigh) I -- will (Nance goes to door. Turns, faces Jean again) Take a good long nap dear, perhaps when you wake up you'll treat it all like a --- bad dream. (she goes in)( Jean stands looking at door a few seconds, she sits down on chair near table with bottle of whiskey on it. At first she is looking into space, then looks up sees bottle, she stares at it a few moments, then takes bottle in hand, ) You devil, you'll never get me.

CURTAIN.

## ACT 11

Ten months later.

Scene: Living room in the home of Blackford Sr. about five minuets walk from Blackford Jr. The room is nicely though not elaborately furnished. A Foyer and a flight of stairs can be plainly seen on the left of room. On the right: A door and a window.

As curtain rises Mabel Blackford, Steve Blackford's only sister, a very charming girl about nineteen years of age is standing at table looking over a list of names.

**Mabel** I wonder where on earth mother expects to place all these people. Mr. & Mrs. Hiram Stickney (she looks up) I wonder who they are. I never even heard of them. (she looks at list again). Mr. & Mrs. Joshua Humbug (she looks up and laughs). What a name to be afflected with. (looks at list again). Well (she shrugs her shoulders). I can only say if this affair proves a success it will be a great surprise to me. (looks at list on other side) Good Lord I think she's got nearly everybody in town here. (she walks toward door, paper in hand, just as Mrs. B. enters. Mrs. Blackford is a stately lady about fifty-eight years of age). I was just coming to you mother; I am a little afraid you are biting off a lot more than you will swallow.

**Mrs. B.** What do you mean by that?

**Mabel** I mean that you've got nearly the whole town on this list. Where <u>are</u> we going to put them all?

Mrs. B. (sighs) We'll have to manage.

Mabel If you'll tell me why under the sun you want these Stickneys and Humbugs and the Lord only knows but other kind of bugs----

Mrs. B. (shakes her head) Mabel the older the grow the less common sense you display. Is fly-paper covered with vinegar or sugar.

Mabel What's that got to do with all the bugs you have got on this list.

Mrs. B. You're hopeless, absolutely hopeless. Steve's bread and butter lies in this little town. Does'nt it?

Mabel Yes: but we were not starving in New York. You insisted on coming out to this God forsaken hole just to be near Marvin.

Mrs. P. Well, whatever the reason we are here and now half of the town are Steve's clients. I am paving a way for the other half.

Mabel But you haven't got enough tables or room for them.

Mrs. P. Now don't you worry about that. I just phones to Marvin. Stanley will be here in a few minuets with two tables. I got two from the Prestons next door and we have four. That makes eight.

Mabel Why that only covers thirty-two and you have more than that on this list without any of us.

Mrs. P. That's all right. I'm sure a lot of these people won't come.

Mabel They might come out of sheer curiosity.

Mrs. P. (in disgusted tone) All right then,wet blanket. If they do come I will manage it somehow. If the worst comes to the worst I've got a couple of old serving tables we can make use of. We'll seat - let me see - oh there is a lot we can seat at these tables that won't know the difference.

Mabel — And another thing Ma, do you think half of these people know how to play Bridge or Whist?

Mrs. B. — They can play that very interesting game of Lottos, I hope. I've got a couple of boxes up in the attic (sarcastically) My dear, dear grandparents passed such an excitesible evening with them.

Thora — (enters with tray and large cake on it) Yust look at these cake, Mrs. Blackford. Ain't she beautiful.

Mrs. B. — Yes, she ain't. I mean she is very beautiful. Did Miss Nance help to make it?

Thora — Miss Nance help me? No - no, Miss Nance she did make him all my herself, but I watch her, and write down the re-cip-y. Where should I put him?

Mrs. B. — Put him in the extension kitchen, Thora.

Thora — Alright, ve got two more in the stove. Be done in a few minuets. Dey will be one lemon and one orange. You will be sure proud of your cakes, but no soul gets the re-cip-y.(Exit Thora)

Mabel — It sure was kind of Jean to let us have Thora for to-night, and certainly more than kind of Nance to come here and do nearly all the baking.

Mrs. B. — (smiles sarcastically) Nance is a clever girl, Mabel . She knows sugar will catch her flies. (Mabel looks at her mother in a puzzled manner) Of course it is foolish of me to expect you to understand. You are a perfect chip of the old block and so are your brothers. Not one of you like your mother. Your poor dear father never argued on that point. He knew all of his offspring were as tactless as he was.

Mabel Nevertheless everyone loved him.

Mrs. B. Yes, everyone loves a fool for what they can get out of him. If it were not for me -- well thats done. There is no sense reproaching the dead. We must watch the living and its up to me to watch Miss Nance as she sprinkles about her sugar.

Mabel Mother, I quite understand what you mean now.

Mrs. B. (in surprised tone) Then it must be very plain if you can see through it; but she'll never get my boy, never while I live.

Mabel (looking at mother steadly) Let me tell you something mother you over estimating your son and under estimating Nance.

Mrs. B. (flushing angryly) Does that Nance is too good for your brother?

Mabel Not exactly. Its just that Steve's old, and bald and poor and hasn't got much sense either. If he had he would follow some of his own inclinations once in a while.

Mrs. B. You mean to insinuate----

Mabel I don't insinuate. I'm telling you what I really think you know that Steve was made to be husband and father but you've made up his mind for him that he's to play beau to his mother chaperon to his sister. Its selfish on your part and mine too, to accept such a sacrifice.

Mr. B. How is it you never thought of that before.

Mabel For two good reasons. Number one, I'm just getting about old enough to understand; Number two, I can see that poor Steve is madly in love with Nance, and I know that Nance receives proposals at an average of at least one a week. Won't she be a fool to marry Steve when she can marry a rich, young and handsome fellow unless she really loves him. Well then I would only say its his good fortune that Cupid is blind and ----

(Enter Steve)

Steve — I promised to be home early to help, so here I am. (he kisses his mother and sister) Everything running smoothly?

Mabel — (Sarcastically) Yes smooth as velvet. Our Maid's gone to bed with a cold and we're going to have about sixty-nine more guests than we can place and mother and I just got through arguing. (she looks at her mother) No, I can see we are not quite through. (she swallows hard) But you needn't worry; Jean came to the rescue. She sent Thora over and Nance came of her own free will. Now, if only half of the town would get ptomaine or something of the sort, everything would be alright. (Steve laughs)

Mrs. B. — I can see nothing to laugh at, Steve, your sister is getting entirely beyond my control.

Steve — (patting his mother gently on the shoulder) No, mother dear, she is not. She is just a girl of to-day; not the sort of your days when girls feared to tell their elders what they thought, but they thought it just the same.

Mrs. B. — Well, I much prefer the girl of my day, who thought a lot and said little.

Mabel — But, mother dear, the girl of your days said very little until she got married, then she made up for it. The girl of to-day has got to do all her talking before she is married; she doesn't get the chance afterward.

Mr. B. — (Angrily) Mabel you know [illegible] more than you should.

Steve — Don't scold her, mother; she's no different than any other girl of to-day.

Mr. B. — That's giving little credit to the generation (to Mabel) Now you please go and see if the tables came and how things are getting on [illegible] the kitchen.

Mabel (smiles) I was just going. (to Steve) There is a lot to be done Steve. You better come in and help to.

Steve I will be with you in a minute. (exit Mabel) It was good of Jean to send her maid over.

Mrs. B. Jean didn't send her. I called up Marvin. He sent her right over.

Steve It was wrong of you to call up Marvin. Jean is mistress of her home.

Mrs. B. You mean she ought to be.

Steve What do you mean by that, mother? I think Jean's home is a model of perfection.

Mrs. B. Yes, with Nance to run it. (she sees she made a blunder) Nance would make a wonderful maid. I wish we could afford to keep her.

Steve (looks up quickly) Nance would make a wonderful wife. I wish I could afford to marry her, -- and in - the -- future I wish you wouldn't speak of Nance as a maid. She is Jean's dearest friend and the best girl God ever made.

Mrs. B. So that's how the land lays.

Mabel (entering) Mrs. Preston sent two tables, but one is minus a leg; that is not exactly minus, it is just loose. If someone that sits at the table happens to touch it, they'll be out of luck.

Mrs. B. Suppose you try and fix it. A couple of nails might do the trick.

Mabel Yes, might is right. Too good blows with a hammer and no table.

Mrs. B. (Sighing) Don't mind her Steve. She is just like her Dad was. Everything was wrong until we proved to him it was right.

Steve (goes to door) I'll try it.

Mabel Yes, you try it. I'll pick up the pieces, but you will carry them in to Mrs. Preston.

Mrs. B. (Sighs) Well I've got some news for you. (Mabel looks up) Your brother is seriously thinking of marrying Nance.

Mabel That's not news to me; but I'm afraid she's not thinking of marrying him.

Mrs. B. (In shocked tone) Are you in your right senses? Don't you realize that if Steve were to marry you'd have to go out and earn your own living?

Mabel That's the part I'd like best. Right here in this house I feel I am holding someone else's job; running Steve's home and spending his money. That's a wife's job and not a sister's.

Mrs. B. Then you would go out so that Nance could come in.

Mabel Why not? Some other girl may have to step out so that I may come in. Nance will marry my brother ( she waves her hand) I'll very likely marry someone's else's brother. That is a standing law since the world was made; you can't change it.

Mrs. B. Can't I? We'll see about that. It is only a brainless little fool like you who would talk such nonsense.

Mabel (Sighs) You're got enough brains for the whole family, so why should I worry.

Mrs. B. You will worry when its too late.

Mabel How could anything worry when it has no brains.

Brs. B. You're quite right, I've yet to see you worried over anything. You're ----

Steve (enters laughing) Its done.-----

Mabel Is it really?

Steve Yes, done for. It stood for two blows, the third one sent the pieces north, south, east and west. What are we going to do about Mrs. Preston.

Mabel (laughs) Its alright. Mrs. Preston told me the table was beyond all hope; but she sent it to prove her will was good.

Mrs. B. Never mind all that now. Go to the attic, Steve. You'll find a few old serving tables. They will have to answer the purpose.

(Steve goes to door, bumps into Nance as she enters)

Steve Pardon me Nance, I was thinking of the old table as it flew and----

Nance (laugh) Flew,is the word. The leg that went through the kitchen windoe, certainly did fly.

Mrs. B. What, my kitchen window. (she turns to Steve) You didn't tell me.

Steve I thought ---- I thought ---- er perhaps------

Mrs. B. Yes, I thought perhaps you'd have sense enough to do such work in the cellar. Whatever possessed you to do carpenter work in the kitchen. I'll (she looks over to Nance, sarcastically) Oh yes I see. Well you might at least try to paste a piece of paper or something over it. I suppose its blowing in.

Steve That reminds me, I came in to ask if there is any glew in the house.

Mrs. B. No, but there mucilage. That will answer the purpose; for paper----

Steve All right mother, now don't you worry, I will fix it, and the first thing in the morning we'll get a glazier. (Exit Steve)

Nance (to Mrs. B.) Did you forget that the Leslies had a card party recently. They must have tables.

Mrs. B. Why that's right. I'll send Thora over.

Nance I rang up Stanley and told him to go over and get them. He'll be here in a few minutes with them.

Mrs. B. Fine (She looks over at Mabel)

Mabel I think you had better go up to the attic and find the lottos.

Mabel The attic is pretty big mother, where do you think I'll find them?

Mrs. B. Well - I - don't- just know; but you'll find them up there somewhere.

Nance (As Mabel goes to door) I'll help you look.

Mrs. B. No - er - Nance I've something to ask you.

Mabel (Looking at her mother) Mother I wish you ----

Mrs. B. (In decided tone) Find the lottos Mabel. (Exit Mabel) (To Nance) Let's sit down Nance. (Mrs. B. walks to couch, Nance follows her. Mrs. B. is lost for words. Nance watches her closely) Nance, I don't just know how to begin. I don't wish to hurt you in the least, if I can help it; but (a pause) you are a clever girl you know----

Nance Yes - I know.

Mrs. B. Just what do you know?

Nance (Looks at Mrs. B. and smiles) Iwouldn't be very clever if I could tell you all I know in a few minutes.

Mrs. B. You understand me, you know just what I mean.

Nance You want me to tell you --- well we won't beat about the bush. I'll put your mind at peace. Steve is a wonderful fellow; I'm real very sorry I can't marry him.

Mrs. B. You can't.

Nance Of course not. He said he'll never marry while his mother lives.

Mrs. B. Then you're sorry I'm not dead?

Nance Why no; but I don't see why you couldn't live and be happy if your son did marry.

Mrs. B. How could I be happy when -- If I cared to explain you would understand.

Nance I do understand thoroughly. You won't allow your married son to provide for you. You call it charity, I call it hypocrocity.

Mrs. B. How dare you.

Nance How dare you try to separate what God means to be together?

Mrs. B. That means you will accept if he proposes?

Nance You have nothing to fear, he will never marry while you live.

Mrs. B. Suppose he should change his mind.

Nance What makes you think he would change his mind?

Mrs. B. When a man of his age certainly begins to take pains in selecting his ties, and when alone always sits in deep thought puffing fings of smoke from his cigar looking into empty space as he does, those are sure signs -----

Nance He loves me (she sighs) Yes, I know that, but sometimes a man doesn't follow the sign correctly. For instance: at a cross-road where one sign post points to two different directions the traveler very often takes the wrong road for the right one.

Mrs. B. And the right one would be? ------

Nance The one that leads to the heart.

Mrs. B. I thought so. The bait you used was sure to catch and you knew it.

Nance I happen to know that you are throwing out a line and bait that you think will catch Teddy Morris for Mabel. Teddy, too is his mother's sole support; but that doesn't seem to worry you. That's perfectly all right, simply because he is another mother's son.

Mrs. B. I suppose you think you are very candid. I think you are very impertinent.

Nance At my age, Mrs. Blackford, being candid is mistaken for being impertinent. At yours being truly impertinent is considered being candid - now if you will please tell me where the lottos are I will run up and tell Mabel. The poor child is likely to rummage around up there for another hour.

Steve (Enters) Well that job is done, what's next.

Nance Did Stanley bring the tables?

Steve Not yet(Nance goes to door) What are you going to do now, Nance? I think you did quite enough for one day.

Nance I am just going up to the attic --- (she looks at Mrs. B. ) You haven't told me where the lottos are.

Mrs. B. They are in the steamer trunk in the east wing of the attic .

Steve (Goes toward door) I will run up for them.

Nance (Looks at Mrs. B. smilingly) Your mother has something to say to you Steve. I don't mind a flight of stairs. Mabel is up there now looking ---- (looks at Mrs. B. again and smiles) I am trying your mother's patience dreadfully. (she walks out quickly)

Steve What did she mean by that, mother?

Mrs. B. She knows that I have eyes that see not only the surface but the interior as well.

Steve I wish I could do that.

Mrs. B. I wish you could. You would see the nice little trap she set for you.

Steve That ---

Mrs. B. (Puts up her hand) Now, now please let me have my say. You can do all the talking after I am through. Nance wants to marry you because she hates me. She's made up her mind to step in so that Mabel and I will step out. -- Steve, if such a day will ever come it will breach my heart. It -- it would kill me. (she drops a tear)

(Steve goes over to his mother, puts his arm around her)

Steve I know you don't say those awful things about Nance because you want to, but because you love me too well.

Mrs. B. Every mother tries to do what she thinks best for her child.

Steve Do you really think it best for your son to remain single.?

Mrs. B. I did think so once. I thought it was your duty to take care of your widowed mother and your sister; but - but - well, I'm beginning to think perhaps it would be better that you should marry, (Steve smiles) but - but not a little beggar.

Steve Then your only objection is that she is poor.

Mrs. B. She is poor and she is coarse; I know the stock she comes from. You can't expect to find a golden nail in a common ash cart. If you pulled the wagon to pieces the best you would find would be a common iron nail.

Steve (Sternly) I understand just what you mean. I'm poor - you wish me to marry - in other words you want to go hunting around the golden wagons to find a golden nail. (He shakes his breath draws a deep breath) My home will never be built with golden nails; it would crumble to pieces. No mother, I'm, good dependable iron; and just what Nance says. Iron, that will give a man strength and red blood to make his own golden nails.

Mrs. B. (Sighing) One son married a drug fiend, the other will marry a little beggar, a no one from nowhere.

Steve What makes you say Jean is a drug fiend when you really don't know what the trouble is.

Mrs. B. If she isn't a drug fiend she is a drunkard. I haven't lived in this God forsaken place nearly a year for nothing. I have made up my mind to know what's what, and I am pretty sure I am getting to the bottom of it.

Steve — So, that's why you induced me to buy this hole; and you are quite contended to live in it.

Mrs. B/ — You can't blame me for trying to save my boy.

Steve — I fail to see how you could save him, even if what you say were true.

Mrs. B. — That's the point; I'm not quite sure. It might be that Marvin is telling me the truth that the doctors gave her drugs when she was so very ill about six months ago. And now she can't get on without them; but, I have noticed - well - I won't say any more, but for very good reasons. I am suspicious and if my suspicions prove correct it's up to me to take my boy's future in hand.

Mabel — (Rushes in) Ted, Morris is on the wire. (Steve is about to go to door) No- no, not for you; he is talking to Nance. He called up at Jean's, and they told him she was here. (She goes over to Steve) Just a little tip brother: Ted is crazy about Nance.

Steve — How do you know?

Mabel — He told me so and asked me to put in a good word for him. I would too for Teddy is a fine fellow; but you are my brother and mother says everyone should build a fence around his own home.

Mrs. B. — You call that building a fence around your own home? You are deliberately tearing ours down so that strangers can trespass. (A pause) Why don't you marry Teddy yourself?

Mabel — Why didn't Jack eat his supper?

Mrs. B. — If Jack had any sense he'd find his way to the pantry. (Steve stands in deep thought)

Steve — Doesn't Ted know that I --

Mabel — I don't think he does - er - perhaps he thinks you don't stand much chance. (Mabel looks out of window) Here come Jean and Marvin.

Mrs. B. Not a word of this to Jean, Mable.

Steve Why not, Jean would do anything in the world for Mable, you know that?

Mrs. B. Then why doesn't she use her influence with Teddy? She knows Mable cares for him.

Mable It wouldn't do any good to hypnotize him into saying: Mable will you marry me? You know - he'd be bound to make up sometime. (She goes to door, opens it). (Jean and Marvin enter. Mable kisses them both) Why so late?.

Jean (As she hands wrap to Marvin) Baby has a little colic, and the new nurse is - rather awkward. (She goes over to Mrs. B. Kisses her) I didn't think you needed me around. Nance is <u>such</u> a wonderful help. (Marvin kisses Mother.)

Mrs. B. (In sarcastic tune) Yes - wonderfull.

Marvin Is everything ready? (Mable takes wrap from Marvin, walks in.)

Mrs. B. There's not much to do now. Steve and Mable can make the punch.

Marvin Stanley can make a fine punch, (To Jean,) Suppose I call him.

Jean I wouldn't mind in the least Marvin you know that, but baby isn't quite well, and the nurse is new. I wouldn't feel quite at ease.

Marvin Just as you say dear, you know best.

Steve Nance and I will make the punch.

Marvin That's right Steve, you can make a pretty good punch, go ahead.

Steve Have we got enough ice?

Mrs. B. Yes plenty of it. (Steve goes in).

Marvin Now mother, what can <u>I</u> do?

Mrs. B. You can place the tables. Mable will show you where they are.

(Mable and Marvin walk toward door)

Oh Marvin before you do anything else, bring in the large table, you know which one Mable, the one we decidedto use out here.

Mable Yes, I know . (They both walk out.

Mrs. B. Teddy rang up here a little while ago..

Jean Yes, I know. I told him Nance was here.

Mrs. B. Its a great pity Nance doesn't care for him, he's such a fine fellow.

Jean He is. I wish Mable could --

Mrs. B. (Quickly) Oh she does, she's mad about him.

Jean I mean I wish Mable could succeed in landing him, but I'm afraid she wont. He's head over heels in love with Nance.

Mrs. B. How many does Nance want?

Jean Just one, one is enough for any sensible girl.

Mrs. B. And that one? ------

Jean (Looks at Mrs. B. sharply) Well -- I can only say -- that who ever he may be is a lucky fellow.

Mrs. B. (Smiles) -- Whoever - he - may - be - As if you didn't know.

Jean (Smiles) If I were to tell you everything I know, you'd know all I know.

Mrs. B. (Looking straight at Jean) And you wouldn't want me to know -- everything, would you?

Jean There's really no need to tell you Ma, you have a nice little way of finding out anything you make up your mind to know.

Mrs. B. I'm really glad you know that my dear.

Jean — Oh yes I know. (enter Marvin and Thora carrying table. Mable follows.)

Mrs. B. — Put it down there, right there near the foyer. I think that's a good place for it, isn't it? (She looks at Jean.)

Jean — Yes -- I think so. (They place the table.

Mable — I don't think we'll get everything on that table.

Mrs. B. — We'll put the punch and glasses on another small table. What do you say Jean?.

Jean — (Smiles) - Why - its alright - in fact that's the way it should be. (Mrs. B. to Marvin.)

Mrs. B. — You see dear, I know Jean know's so much better than I just how things should be done.

Marvin — Yes, I suppose she does. Then its alright,we'll bring another small table.

Thora — Der is a small table what I tink she vill fit yust nice here. I get him. (Thora walks out.)

Mable — Jean and I will get the table ready.

Mrs. B. — Yes, and when the guests arrive, you can attend to things at the card tables and, Jean, to the reception table.

Marvin — You mean? ------

Mrs. B. — I mean that Jean can see that everybody is properly served.

Marvin — (Nervously) I think -- I think I could ---

Mrs. B. — Oh no you can't, your too awkward, Jean will fill the place splendidly, and I know she don't mind, in fact I think she likes to do it.

Jean — Yes, yes, of course, I - don't mind doing it.

Mrs. B. — Now I'll go up to dress. Mable, I think you better do the same, its getting late. Nance knows where everything is that belong on the table.

(She goes to door.) Come along Mable, come along. If you don't hurry the guests will be here before your ready. (Mable goes to her mother).

Mable — It doesn't take me long Jean, I'll be right back to help. Steve will tell you where all the liquors are, he's using some of it for the punch, Nance didn't want him to, but Steve said, it sould be a hell of a punch without some kick in it.

Mrs. B. — (Indignantly) Mable, what have I told you about using slang?

Mable — I've tried mother, but I forget its so darn hard. (Mable quickly puts her hand to her mouth.) You see mother, that's just the way, it slips out without the least warning. (Marvin laughs) That's right go ahead.

Mrs. B. — And encourage it. If you think that something to laugh at, I don't. (She draws a deep breath). I wish I wer'nt in a hurry. (She takes a step into the doorway, turn back,) Oh Jean, I forgot to ask about your Aunt Clara, I hope she's coming?

Jean — She will, that is if she doesn't stop at the house and find baby isn't quite well.

Mrs. B. — One would think that baby is the only baby in the world.

Jean — She is, to us.

Mrs. B. — Wait until she grows up and marries. You'll be as welcome around her house as --- well about as welcome as a cat near mouse hole.

Jean — I think I could easily remedy that.

Mrs. B. — How?

Jean — I wouldn't be a cat. (Enter Marvin carrying small table, puts it down while mother speaks.)

Mrs. B. The cat doesn't mind being a cat so long as she catches her mouse. (Mrs. B. walks in).

Jean You heard what she said?

Marvin Yes.

Jean Why didn't you say something?

Marvin She's my mother, Jean.

Jean I'm your wife and your child's mother.

Marvin By saying nothing I did what I know is best for you.

Jean (Smiles sarcastically) You're over practical Marvin, I'm afraid you'll learn your lesson too late.

Marvin (Takes his wife in his arms.) Whatever I do Jean, whether I make a blunder, or hit the nail on the head, its all in trying to do what's best for you dear. (He holds her tightly for a few moments). You'll try -- you won't dear -----

Jean (Looks up at Husband Kisses him.) I won't dear. I won't even taste the punch. I'll -- (Enter Nance with trays and twolarge cakes on them. Marvin takes one of them. They place cakes on table.) They look lovely Nance, are they as good as they look?

Nance They are, I brought some eggs and butter from home. (She looks up at Marvin) I didn't mean to be nasty Marvin, you know your mother is rather ---- All women of her age are. So I brought the butter and eggs, she'll never know about it, and you want her to have nice cakes, don't you?

Marvin Of course I do. We can always rely on you. (Enter Mrs. Coby) ( Jean runs over to her takes her wrap and kisses her)

Jean Did you stop at the house?

Nance What a question, do you think she'd pass without going in to see baby?

Marvin How is she? Aunt Clara.

Mrs. C. Fast alseep, and so is the nurse. (Jean looks up quickly) Now don't be alarmed. Its perfectly alright, Stanley's there, he won't close an eye until you get back, -- you know that. (She looks around) I see everybody's busy. Where's the hostess.

Jean She'll be with you in a minute, Auntie.

Mrs. C. I'm not -- (She looks at Marvin). (Jean sees the situation, goes over to Marvin, throws Mrs. C's wrap over his arm) Put Aunt Clara's wrap where mine is.

Marvin (As he goes to door) You'd better hurry girls and get that table ready. (Exit Marvin)

Mrs. C. I almost put my foot in again, didn't I dearie?

Nance You've got nothing on me Aunt Clara, I put my foot into it so bad, it took Marvin's good nature to pull it out.

Mrs. C. Poor fellow, I guess he know. Isn't it really lucky all the children are like the father was? Its a great pity he couldn't live to a good old age.

Nance Pity? He was the luckiest man God ever made. He went from Hell to Heaven.

Jean Yes, and if the dead know anything, he's having a grand laugh on Steve for walking into his shoes. (Mable rushes into room. Runs over to Mrs. C. Kisses her.)

Mable How do you like my dress Aunt Clara?

Mrs. C. You look like food for the Gods.

Nance Well I <u>do</u> hope some one <u>I</u> know will bite hard.

Mrs. C. Who's the someone Jean? (Jean looks at Mrs. C. but does not answer)

Mable You know all my secrets Auntie, don't you?

Mrs. C. Ted? -- Really?

Mable Yes, but what's the use, he wants Nance.

Mrs. C. Oh does he, well he'll want you, before I'm through with him.

Mable (Throws her arms around Mrs. C.) Oh Aunt Clara please, please promise me you won't say anything.

Mrs. C. Now don't you worry dear. (She turns to Nance) Nance, you can fix this little thing up, as easily as a boy can eat a pie.

Nance You mean to keep out of sight.

Mrs. C. Just the opposite, keep <u>in</u> sight continually, with Steve close at your heels.

Nance And am I supposed to ask Steve to ----

Mrs. C I'll attend to that to.

Nance (In shocked tune) Aunt Clara you really musn't -----

Mrs. C. Now don't you worry, I won't have to, he'll be at your heels. The same as he always is, but if there's any interference, as there <u>might</u> be to-night,( She looks at Jean, then at Mable then back to Nance) There's three against one.

Mable Mother <u>wants</u> me to marry Ted.

Mr. C. But she doesn't want Steve to marry Nance.

Mable (Looking straight at Nance) I'm not so sure whether Nance wants to marry Steve.) )Nance looks at Mable, smiles.)

Nance And your mother takes <u>you</u> for a fool.

Mable Whether I am, or whether I ain't, she's got me believing it, really now, Nance tell us the truth, do you really care?

Nance Why are you so anxious to know?

Mable Well, if you heard your brother sigh through half the night, and talk out of his sleep the other half, you'd want to know?

Nance But suppose you do know, what good will that do?

Mable (Smiles) Just you tell me that you care, that's all you need know about it.

Jean (Smiles) She cares Mable. (Mable looks at Nance a moment then rushes out of room.)

Mrs. C. What a dear child. Jean you must help us with - teddy.

Jean Its up to Nance, she must give Steve the chance to propose, then there may be some hope, but don't be too sure Auntie, a fellow can't lose more than one girl.

Mrs. C. No, not more than one at a time, but they always want one. And we'll have one right handy. (Nance goes to door)

Nance I'm going up to dress. I won't be long. (Exit Nance)

Jean Don't you understand Auntie, Nance is madly in love with Steve, but she knows what she's up against.

Mrs. C. Why don't you tell Steve, Nance's only objection is to living with his mother.

Jean It isn't so, for it wouldn't do any good if she didn't. Nance knows my mother-in-law came out here tolive, just to spy on me.

Mrs. C. It hasn't done her much good, has it?

Jean I'm not so sure about that, she weaves her web like the spider, she never tires until she catches her fly. You know she's called on us a number of times, and Nance told her I was ill or asleep.

Mrs. C. Well? What could she take out of that?

Jean — You couldn't, but she can. I can't help thinking she's got something up her sleve, you know the egg woman came in one day, When I was --- she asked permission to go to the bath room, she came up, I was there,so, (she looks downward) -- I didn't even know she was there, until Thora told me about it the next day.

Mrs. C. — And you think.

Jean — I don't know, she hasn't said anything, but she may be waiting for a special time at a special place, that's her usual way.

Mrs. C. — Then Jean watch yourself this evening, this might be her special time and place, promise me dearie you won't touch a thing.

Jean — (Shakes her head) I won't Auntie, I won't. But you musn't hang around me. It only makes thinks look conspicuous, and I get so dreadfully nervous, I don't know what I'M doing or saying.

Mrs. C. — If I were only sure you could manage by yourself. Id ----

(Enter Mrs. B.)

Mrs. B. — (Coming over to Mrs. C. takes her hand) I'm so glad you came, I thought perhaps you wouldn't trust the baby to the new nurse.

Mrs. C. — Stanley's very dependable, besides I imagine you'd be dreadfully disappointed if I didn't come.

Mrs. B. — I would indeed. I've planed a most delightful evening. (Enter Thora carrying a large punch bowl filled with punch, it is so heavy, Thora slaggers with it, spilling part of contents, then with great effort and Jean's assistance she succeeds in placing it safely on table.

Jean — Why didn't Mr. Blackford carry this in?

Thora — One Mr. Blackford, he go get dressed, the other, he spake with yentleman, yust came in.

Mrs. B. There, I told them so, the guests would arrive before they were ready. Harry Thora wipe up this mess.

Thora Yes - mam I vil. (Exit Thora).

Mrs. B. Jean will you get the rest of the things on the table? I'll go out to receive the guests. (Exit Mrs. B. )

Mrs. C. She's planed a most delightful evening.

Jean That depends on what she calls delightful. (Enter Nance dressed in evening gown. Jean looks at her.) Hoodini couldn't have done it much quicker Nance.

Nance I just changed my gown and shoes. That doesn't take long. (Voices heard from within). (Guests are arriving). Come on Jean, we'll finish this table. (Jean goes to door with Nance).

Mrs. B. Nance --(a pause) -- Jean --(she walks over to Jean.) Jean dear, you promised, but -- but - it - wouldn't be the first time, you broke your promise -- I -- I-- (she looks at Nance). Nance you'll -- you'll watch-- you won't let her -- not here Nance she mustn't take a drip.

Nance (Shakes her head) That's the mistake your always making Auntie, continuous warning against doing a thing is the creater of it. If you could only understand that.

Mrs. C. I can only understand the danger -(A pause) well have it your way, I'll say no more. (Jean and Nance walk in). (Mrs. C. walks to mirror adjusts a few hair pins, stops to think a few moments). If she should -- I don't care what Nance says. I'm going to watch her every move, I'll-- (Enter Teddy).

Teddy Why hellow Aunt Clara, your looking fine. Where's Nance?

Mrs. C. Oh out there some where with Steve.

Teddy (Looking up) Doesn't she know I'm here?

Mrs. C. I think she does but, - (Enter Nance and Jean carrying dainties for the table.)

Jean Hellow Ted, glad you came so early. (Jean and Nance place things on table.)

Teddy I - I - er - I've been here quite a while.( He looks at Nance) Didn't you know?

Nance Yes, Mable told me you were here.

Teddy (Rather awkwardly) Oh - did - she? (Enter Steve)

Steve Hello Ted, glad to see you. (Shakes hands with Ted.

Mrs. C. (To Steve) I thought you were talking to Nance. (Enter Mable.)

Mable Auntie, mother wants you to meet Mrs. Daniels, before the game starts, and - Ted, Marvin's got his hands full out there. Won't you go out and help him.

Teddy Sure, come along Steve, we'll <u>all</u> lend a hand.

Mable Quickly -- no - no - Steve must - must (She thinks quickly) crack some ice, the - the punch is getting cold - I - I - mean - warm, come along Auntie, (She takes Auntie's arm, brushes close by Steve, whispers) Its all right Steve - shoot. ( Steve looks up quickly, understands.)

Mrs. C. Come along Ted, you're one of the family. (Ted looks over at Nance) You're on the wrong track Ted, this way. ( Ted walks over to Mrs. Coby and Mable looks back at Nance - walks out.)

Jean (Looks at Steve, smiles) Suppose I go and crack that ice?

Steve (Smiles - Jean walks out.)

Steve (Looks at Nance a moment) Nance, you know just what I want to say don't you?

Nance Yes, but do you expect me to say it for you?

Steve If you knew -- If you would only see -- if -- If -- (He draws a deep breath) Nance dear will you be my wife? ( A sigh of relief, Nance smiles)

Nance Steve I love you, I have loved you, since the first day I saw you. (Steve is about to grasp her in embrace but Nance puts up her hand) Wait a minute. There are two obstacles, very, very hard to overcome.

Steve One is my mother?

Nance Yes.

Steve When I explain to her that my life won't be worth living without you ---

Nance (Interrupts quickly) Then my life wont be worth living with you.

Steve Your wrong Nance, Love has shown me the true light of everything.

Nance Marvin loves Jean madly, yet doesn't see.

Steve Marvin's hands are tied, Nance - I need'nt tell you why.

Nance You --- pity Marvin?

Steve More than you can understand.

Nance How about Jean? Would you do anything to help her?

Steve Anything in the world.

Nance Then here's your chance and mine to -- to make ourselves worthy of the name friend.

Steve I'm ready to do anything on earth that will help them.

Nance (Looking up at Steve) - Steve, I can't leave Jean. She needs me, as a sick child needs its mother.

Steve (In shocked tone) Then you would -- he looks at her a moment-- Would you call me a man, if I agreed to that.

Nance Yes, every inch a man.

Steve And if I did'nt I suppose I'd be a wretch.

Nance Yes.

Steve Then your going to marry a wrtech. (He grabs her in his arms, hisses her, as Jean walks in.)

Jean Congratulations ---

Nance But -----

Steve No buts Jean, we're going to build a little home right next to yours.

Jean (Looking at Nance) I understand the but now, Nance would give up the man she loves, because she knows I need her, (to Nance) and do you think I would allow you to do that for me? (She walks over to Nance, kisses her affectionally.) (Then releases her walks over to Steve, kisses him, ) Your the luckiest man in the world, Steve.

Steve I know it. (He takes Nance in his arms, enter George Dillingham, a gentleman about thirty years of age, he stands in doorway looking at Steve and Nance. Jean Sees him, smiles, a pause, motions to Steve to look toward the door. Steve releases Nance turns, sees George.)

Steve (Surprised) Well of all the people on earth George. I never expected to see you here to-night. (He shakes George's hand heartily.) I thought you were in Kansas City.

George I was. I just came in to buy up some stock. I came over to see my sister, she tells me she's going to sort of a card party and shows me the invitation. I read Blackford, somehow I knew at once it was you, so here I am boy.

Steve You really don't know how glad I am to see you. Jean (He takes Jean's hand) Jean, meet my friend, Mr. Dillingham. (Mr. D.takes Jean's extended hand.) (Steve takes Nance's hand) and

Mr. D. Your wife of course.

Steve Not yet, we became engaged about the moment you stood in that doorway.

Mr. D. (Surprised) Well - well - my hearty congratulations. (He shakes Steve's hand heartily then takes Nance's hand.) That beau of yours is so excited, he forgot to mention your name. (Steve laughs.)

Nance Miss Obrien

Mr. D. Congratulations Miss Obrien. Judging from the choice you made, I don't think you ever need anyones advice. (He looks over at table.) What's this? drinks, A toast is in good order, come on Steve, fill up the glasses. (Steve goes to table fills up two glasses, is about to hand one to Mr. D.)

Mr. D. Where are the other two?

Nance We really don't care for anything just now.

Mr. D. Nonsence, I see punch here, we're <u>all</u> going to join in this toast. (Mr. D. fills up two glasses, hands one to Jean and one to Nance. Then raises his glass.) Here's to the health and happiness of the newly engaged couple, may there be no obstacles heading to the path of the alter.(All raise glasses to lips. )

As Jean raises glass, Nance looks at her, Jean drops her glass. looks at Mr. G. smiles)

Jean When I was a child my dad called me butter fingers. You see I still have them.

Mr. D. (Filling another glass) I'm a little bit superstitous Mrs. Blackford. This looks like -- well-- like something disappointing. (He hands her a filled glass.

Jean I really don't care for it, Mr. Dillingham.

Mr. D. Don't care for a toast to your brother-in-law, and his fiancee?

Jean (Smiles) I mean ---

Mr. D. I know what you mean, but a toast is a toast, so-- (Jean places glass to her lips, drinks slowly, but finishes the contents.) (Enter Marvin, sees Jean with glass in hand.)

Marvin Your table's waiting Mr.Dillingham. (Steve takes Jean's glass, places it on table.)

Mr. D. I'm sorry to have kept them waiting, but a toast to the newly engaged -----(Marvin looks up surprised.) Didn't you know?

Marvin I've been suspecting -- but -- (He goes over to Nance, kisses her.) Congratulations Nance, you know how happy this makes me.

Nance I know. (Marvin goes over to Steve takes his hand.)

Marvin I know your going to be happy, old boy, you couldn't be anything else with her. (They shake hands heartily.

Nance We're holding up the game.

Steve Yes, mother will be after us in a minute, lets go. (Steve and Nance go to door. Mr. D. walks to door. Marvin looks at Jean.)

Marvin Are you? ---- Oh I forgot this is your post.

Jean Yes.

Nance We'll say nothing about our engagement until later in the evening.

Steve I think Nance is quite right. It would hold up the game. We'll announce it later in the evening. Come along Marvin. (Marvin looks at Jean, walks to door, turns) --

Marvin Suppose I take your place dear?

Jean You heard what your mother said, your to awkward.

Marvin Alright dear, but don't tire yourself. (They walk in)) (Jean walks to door, then slowly back to table, stands looking at it a moment, then grabs bottle of whiskey, fills a glass with trembling hand, is about to place glass to lips, Thora rushes over to her from doorway. Grabs Jean's arm. )

Jean Have you been spying again?

Thora Ye -- Yes mam, (in excited tone), yo-- you-- must not, please Mrs. Blackford. Please done take it.

Jean (Trembling) I must Thora -- I must, just this one, it will quiet my nerves a little. (She tries to raise arm, but Thora holds firm.

Jean (Angrily) Let me, do you hear, let go of my arm.

Thora You know Mrs. Blackford, ven you takes von drinks, you sure alvays takes more.

Jean (Trembling) I wont take any more, not to-night, but I must, I must have this one. (Jean is about to raise glass, Thora holds firmly, spilling some of the contents) (Jean enraged) How dare you, are you my mistress, or am I yours.

Thora Yo-- you are my mistress, Mrs. Blackford, but I vont, I vont let let you have that drink.

Jean We'll see, (She takes bottle, refills glass. Thora is dreadfully frightened, but she plucks up courage.)

Thora (In decided tone) I-- I-- vont let you take it.

Jean (looks at Thora as she stands holding glass, with trembling hand) You---- wont? --- (She quickly raises glass, Thora grabs her arm again, spilling some of the whiskey, Jean so enraged slaps Thora in the face, then in loud angry tone) Get out of this room at once. (Thora walks to door, Jean quickly swallows whats lets in glass, quickly refills glass, As Thora nears door she turns, sees glass refilled, is about to come back to table, she looks toward opposite door. Sees Mrs. B. standing in door way. Thora becomes terror stricken. She tries to motion to Jean to look at door. Jean does not understand, she looks at Thora fiercely, cries out.) I thought I told you to get out.

Thora (Trying with all her might to make Jean understand) I-- I-- er, yust -- yust, dis von time Mrs. Blackford, I yust feel like to have dat drink. (She looks at Mrs. B.Senior) Mrs. Blackford, she be so mean to-day, I never much care for viskey, but I got yust got such a belly hurt. (Jean looks over at Mrs. B. smiles.)

Jean Why didn't you say so in the first place?.(She hands Thora the glass. Thora takes a sip.)

Thora You see I done take only a lettle bit yust enough for belly hurt.

Mrs. B. (Walks over to table.) There's plenty of stuff in the kitchen Thora, why did you have to come in here for it?

Thora (Stammers) In -- in-- de kitchen? I-- I-- don't see him.

Mrs. B. You don't? There's a bottle standing on the kitchen table, I just saw it there.

Thora (Tries to smile) On de kitchen table. Vas'nt I be foolish to come in here. You makes a, -- what you call em-- yes a mistake.

Mrs. B. I never make mistakes.

Thora (Glad to get out) No? -- den itmoast be in der. (She goes to door).

Jean Thora, I wish you'd run home and see if Baby is alright.

Thora I can phone and speak mit Stanley.

Jean Stanley will tell you everything is alright, he wont want to worry me.

Thora I go. (Thora walks out.)

Mrs. B. Jean --- why -- is Steve so unusally happy?

Jean Why ask me?

Mrs. B. I can't very well ask him in there.

Jean He wont be in there so very long.

Mrs. B. But I'm dreadfully nervous, I -- I-- Has he proposed to Nance and been accepted?

Jean (Smiles) If he has, its the best thing that could happen, if you want to land Teddie for Mable.

Mrs. B. So, she's played her trumps and won.

Jean Yes -- Steve won after a hard battle, but it was worth fighting for.

Mrs. B. You think so?

Jean I do.

Mrs. B. We'll see. (She walks out.)

Jean That settles her pleasure for the evening. (She looks at table, enter Mr. Silas Quiggs, one of the tradesmen, a guest of the evening.)

Mr. Q. How-do Mrs. Blackford, glad to see yer lookin so fine. You don't mind letten me have a drink, I'm so dry, I could drink up the Hudson river.

Jean — Come right over Mr. Quiggs, what will you have?

Mr. Q. — The punch ef yer don't mind, its the best yer got here fer quenchin the thirst.

Jean — Why no, you can have something stronger and a glass of vichy after it.

Mr. Q. — Your right, some whiskey then, if you please.

Jean — (Pours out whiskey, hands it to Mr. Q. then fills up large glass of vichy)

Mr. Q. — Where's yours, Mrs. Blackford?

Jean — (Smiles) If I were to drink with everybody, I'd be quite intoxicated before the night's over, but I'll take a little punch just to please you. (She fills up glass with punch, Mr. Q. raises glass.)

Mr. Q. — Here's ter your good health Mrs. Blackford. (He swallows whiskey as Jean swallows the punch. Mr. Q. then takes vichy drinks.) That sure was a good drink. This is a fine party, and your mother-in-law sure is a fine women, ter think of invitin all poor common people. She's a lady, every inch of her.

Jean — Yes -- you'll excuse me a minute. I've got something to attend to in there.

Mr. Q. — Sure, go right ahead, I'm goin back to the game. Lotto's sure is a fine excitin game.

Jean — (As she goes to door). It -- is --- wonderful. (She walks out) (Mr. Q. looks at table a minute, goes over fills up glass, Mrs. Q. enters.)

Mrs. Q. — Are you in this next game of lotto's or ain't you?

Mr. Q. I -- I-- was just comin in. Say Martha that's all wrong about what Mame says, about Mrs. B. gettin drunk, I think the time she brought those eggs over, Mrs. Blackford was sick, jest ordinary every day sick. Say-don't you feel like fallin all over yerself when yer good and sick and must go to the bath room.

Mrs. Q. Sure, but Mame said she smelt from whiskey so bad, it was enough ter throw yer over.

Mr. Q. Well, when you had the nomonie, didn't the doctor tell us to give you whiskey.

Mrs. Q. But she didn't have any nomonie. If she had she'd been as near dead as I was, and couldn't go to the bath room.

Mr. Q. (Shakes his head) No womon will ever take up for another womon, but a man(he shakes his head) its different.

Mrs. Q. Sure, especially, when she's young and good lookin like Mrs. Blackford.

Mr. Q. And yer can't blane a man fer that, after he's been lookin at the likes a you so long.

Mrs. Q. (In aggry tone) If you don't want somethin ter happen now and here, come right inter the game.

Mr. Q. (Goes to door) I told her I was just comin in.

Mrs. Q. Well yer better or you'll be going out quicker then yer expect, (They both walk out. Voices are heard from within, then Jean walks in, goes over to table, fills glass with vichy, drinks. Loud laughter heard from within, Jean looks up passes her hand across her forehead - whispers) My God, I've gone too far. If -- if I can only manage to walk straight. The -- the rest -- will be alright. My -- my -- mind's still clear. (She takes a few

steps, with a little difficulty.) Not so very bad, I-- I-- think I'll pull through. (Enter Thora looking very much excited)

Thora — Oh Mrs. Blackford, the whiskey what vas in de kitchen, a lot, a whole lot vent avay. (She trembles with excitement) You -- you -- didn't take him? (She looks directly into Jean's eyes, -In shocked tone). You did. Oh -- I must get Mr. Blackford. You must go home.

Jean — (Jean grabs Thora by the arm) No-- no Thora, I'm alright. I'm just on the brink, but I'll come around alright before they come in.

Thora — I'm-- afraid-- I'm afraid-- Oh Mrs. Blackford its best for you to go home.

Jean — That-- that-- would only make things worse, she suspects -- me -- I-- I-- know it, and, and I'm steady enough. I-- I'm sure I can manage. Get me a bromo quickly. (Thora goes to door.)

Thora — You dont take some more now ven I go?

Jean — No-- no-- go get the bromo.

Thora — I get it in a minute. (Exit Thora.)

Jean — (Walks to test herself, stops a moment.) Not bad, and-- my - minds pretty clear. I'll -- I'll come out alright. I---- (Enter Thora)

Thora — (Excitedly) There's no bromo in the house. You, you must vait a few minutes, I get him in de drug store in just a minute. (She rushes out. Laughter again heard from within. Jean looks up, realizing danger. She tries again to see whether she can manage to walk straight, but finds it a little difficult this time.

Jean. — I-- I-- wonder -- no-- (Enter Nance)

Nance (Laughingly) She's on Jean, I can see it in her every move, did you tell her?

Jean Sh-- She's -- on -- no-- I didn't tell her but-- sh-- she-- knows alright. (Nance looks at Jean, at once sees the situation.)

Nance My God Jean, you-----

Jean (Puts up her hand) Now-- now-- dont get -- get-- excited, I'm alright, I sent Thora for a bromo. I'll be fine in a few minutes, if you'll only let -- let-- met alone.

Nance Oh Jean, this is the last place on earth it should have happened.

Jean Ye- yes I know-- but I couldn't help it. My-- my-- nerves-- my-- my will power l-- la-- left me, bu-- but-- dont worry Nance, I-- I-- really haven't got a - a regular Jag, Its just -- now don't you worry dear-- I'll manage it, se -- see if I wont. (Enter Thora with bottle of bromo.

Thora Shall I fix em?

Nance Give it to me. (She tears off paper, is about to remove cork, enter Mrs. B.)

Mrs. B. Where's Mable? Ted says he isn't feeling well. He wants to go home, after all my--- the little dunce, I suppose she's paying attention to one of those grocery boys.

Nance (Trying to hide bottle of bromo) I don't blame her, those poor boys feel dreadfully out of place here, and she's doing her best-- (Thora walks of room, looking at Jean until she reaches door)

Mrs. B. She's done her best to break the last straw, poor Teddy, jilted by one girl, and completly ignored by the other -- (She looks at Nance's hand.) Who's taking bromo?

Nance I am, my head aches dreadfully.

Mrs. B. That's too bad. (She looks at Jean,) Give Jean a dose while your at it, she looks as if she has -- a -- pretty -- bad -- headache. (She goes to door.) If Ted comes in here, try and keep him Nance, until I find Mable. (She is about to walk out as Mable walks in) Oh here you are. Do you know Ted wants to go home?

Mable Yes-- he told me so.

Mrs. B. And you couldn't induce him to--

Mable I don't know, I didn't try.

Mrs. B. You didn't try? (Nance is watching Jean closely. Jean is afraid to move. Holds on to a chair.) I thought you cared.

Mable Yes, that's why I don't try. If you think I'm going to vamp a fine fellow like Ted, and fool him into a loveless marriage, you've got another think coming.

Mrs. B. I said nothing about vamp, in fact - (she looks directly at Nance) the very sight of a vamp sickens me, but you might give him the chance to see that you care just a little.

Mable Nobody wants what their sure they can get, but they go to extremes to get what they must fight for. Nance proved that didn't she?

Mrs. B. I fail to see how-----

Mable I'm sure you know she never encouraged Ted.

Mrs. B. I thought you were alluding to your brother and I thought to that -- Nance had something -- to- to - tell me.

Nance (Looking directly at Mrs. B. ) Your son will tell you.

Mrs. B. Oh -- Will he? ---

Nance Yes.

Jean — Wh -- what's the idea of telling you something-- that-- you already know.

Mable — Is it Nance? Are? Come on Nance tell me, (She looks up into Nance's eyes, Nance smiles, shakes her head) Yes. Oh Nance I'm so glad (she kisses her heartily) Where's Steve? (She's about to run to door)

Nance — No one in there knows just yet.

Mable — I'll do it quietly. I just can't wait. (She rushes out).

Mrs. B. — Well -- now that its no longer a secret -- that is, a secret to the family, I hope you'll accept my congratulations. (She takes Nance's hand.) I hope you'll make Steve very happy.

Nance — Thank you. I know we'll <u>both</u> be very happy. (Laughter heard from within.)

Mrs. B. — I think the game's over, there were just a couple of tables finishing up when I left. I'll-- (Enter Steve, Mr. Dillingham, Mr. Dillingham's sister, Mrs. Cross, and her husband, also a few other guests.)

Mrs. Cross — (Goes over to Jean) How do you do, Mrs. Blackford. (They shake hands, she smiles.) Wasn't it a funny coincidence?

Jean — (Holding chair with one hand) f - funny? What?

Mrs. Cross — Why George. George's being an old friend of my husband's.

Jean — Yes -- yes -- was-- wasn't it? (Nance is watching Jean closely, Steve goes over to Nance but Nance scarcely notices him)

Steve — Come on folks, we all came in for something good to eat and drink, lets have it. Step forward Jean, to your task. (At these words, Nance startles, grabs Steve's hand tightly) (hoping he may understand, but he doesn't. He kisses her hand firmly and with the other a love tap.)

Come on Jean lets start. (Jean takes hand from chair, tries with all her might to walk steadily to table. She takes the first few steps pretty well, then Nance walks over to her so as to give her a chance to use her as a brace in emergency.

Nance (As she walks over to Jean) I hope the punch is still cold enough. (They are walking toward the table, Jean manages to reach table without staggering, but with great effort.

Jean Wi- whiskey fo- for the men - I suppose? (She takes up bottle, hand unsteady.)

Steve For me ----

Mr. D. And for me. (Jean pours out whiskey with unsteady hand. Steve takes up glasses, beginning to suspect. Mrs. B. is now watching closely.)

Mrs. B. (Turns to Mrs. Cross) You'll have some punch, Mrs. Cross?

Mrs. Cross-I very seldom take anything, but ~~I~~-- I'll have a glass of punch.

Mrs. B. I'll join you. Jean dear fill up the glasses.( Jean takes up ladle, fills one glass, almost steadily, but in filling the second one her hand trembles badly, spills some of contents, she manages to fill glass but with great effort. Steve watches, is now convinced Jean is intoxicated.

Mr. D. (Raising his glass) Here's to the health of our hostess. (They drink. Nance and Steve are watching Jean closely. Enter Marvin and Ted.)

Marvin Come on Ted a couple of drinks before you go.

Mrs. B. Go? Why go?

Ted Well you see Mrs. Blackford -- I er --

Mrs. B. I see nothing but that your here, and your going to stay and spend a delightful evening.

Ted But -----

Mrs. B. No buts, I know what's best for you.

Marvin Two whiskeys Jean, (Jean fills glasses but this time less steady than the first. Marvin does not notice it, he's lookint at Ted. Steve takes filled glasses hands them to Marvin and Ted. As they drink, enter Mable and a number of guests.)

Mable (To her mother) The Stickneys, and the Humbugs, and Fairchilds have gone home mother. I couldn't induce them to stay.

Mrs. B. (Sarcastically) Thats too bad, but its just as well, there were really too many, we'll have a little more elbow room.

Mrs.Cross (Looking over at Jean) Has your Aunt gone home Mrs. Blackford?

Jean Wh -- why -- no, I-- I don't -- think so, sh-- she hasn't said-- goodnight -- h -- has she?

Mrs. C (Looks at Jean not seeming to understand)

Mrs. B. I'll wager she's gone over to see if baby's alright.

Marvin I think your right mother. (Mable is passing refreshments around. Marvin and Steve are placing chairs for guests. Nance is watching Jean almost terror stricken with the situation. She manages to reach Steve's side, whispers) If you could telephone Aunt Clara to say the baby is ill.( Steve presses her hand whispers( I'll manage it. (He takes one step as Mrs. Coby enters)

Mrs. B. How's the baby, Mrs. Coby?

Mrs. C. (Smiles) How did you know I was there?

Mrs. B. Why I know just what you'd do for that baby, is she alright?

Mrs. C. She's fine fast asleep, looking more like a little angel than a living baby. (This remark is a staggering blow to Nance and Steve. Mrs. Coby walks over to Mrs. B.) I suppose its all over?

Mrs. B. What?

Mrs. C. Why the announcement.

Mrs. B. You mean-----

Mrs. C. Nance and Steve of course.

Mrs. B. Not yet.

Mrs. C. Oh I'm sorry if I let the cat out of the bay too soon.

Marvin Its alright Aunt Clara, I was just going to announce it as you came in. Ladies and Gentlemen I take great pleasure in announcing the engagement of Miss Nance Obrien, and my brother Steve.

Mrs. Cross Well, well that's indeed a great surprise. We thought ---

Mr. Cross Never mind dear what we thought, we know now -- congratulations are in order.

Mrs. C. Quite right. (Mrs. Coby walks over to Steve) Steve if you went to the end of the earth to find a wife, you couldn't find a better one, congratulations. (She shakes his hand heartily.

A lady guest (To Mrs. Blackford Sr.) Congratulations, Mrs. Blackford, judging from Mrs. Coby's remark, and I'm quite sure Mrs. Coby knows, you are a very lucky mother.

Mrs. B. (Smiles) Very. (Congratulations are passing round)

Nance (Carelessly to Jean) Sit down dear you look so tired.

Jean (Smiles) I'm--- I'm -- not very tired dear --

Mr. D. Now's the time for a real toast. Come Mrs. Blackford, fill them fast. (Steve sees the situation, realizes Jean can't possibly pull through without being detected.

Steve (Walks over to table) Come on sis, I'll help . (He takes up bottle, looks at guests) Sing out. What's yours Mr. Cross?

Mr. C. Scotch, please. (Steve fills glass, hands it to Marvin to pass.) Yours George?

George Straight. (Steve again fills glass, hands it to Marvin, Jean is pouring punch into glasses. Steve takes them from her as quickly as she fills them so as to prevent guests from noticing her unsteady hand. When he sees her hand is very unsteady, he pushes her arm as if by accident.

Steve (Smiles) I know I'm clumsy, but its alright, I spilled it. I'll refill it. ( And he quickly fills some more. Marvin passes glasses around. Steve looks over at Ted.) Oh Ted your standing back in that corner. Come near overlooking you. What's your, old boy?

Ted Oh anything. (Mrs. Coby sees Jean's condition, goes over to Nance, looks at her, Nance returns look. They understand each other.)

Steve When a man says Oh anything, he means whiskey. (He smiles, pours out whiskey, hands it to Marvin to pass. All glasses filled.)

Marvin (Turns to George Dillingham) Mr. Dillingham, you and Steve have been friends for years. Its up to you.

George I gave a toast once before in the beginning of the evening, but I don't mind giving another. Here's to the health and happiness of the nearby engaged couple. May their lives to their golden anniversary be one long sweet honeymoon. (All raise glasses to lips. No one takes notice that Jean held no glass but Mrs. B. )

Mrs. B. Jean dear, you were the only one, that didn't take part in the toast, didn't you? Why of course you do, no one's happier over this than you are, come fill your glass and drink with me.

Jean I -- I'd -- like to mother -- b -- but I-- I er -- I've a little-- bit of -- a headache, and -- and--

Nance — Its -- its best she doesn't take anything, when her head aches.

Mrs. B. — (Sarcastically) Then -- of course it would be wrong on my part to coax her. (As she speaks to Jean she is standing close to one of the lady guests, directly opposite Jean, at the other end of the room.) Jean dear, Mrs. Elsman just told me she's never had the pleasure of a few minutes conversation with you.

Jean — (Smiles, trying hard to appear calm and steady.) I -- I'll be -- de -- delighted t -- to talk t -- to Mrs. Els -- Elsman, surely. (She takes a few steps as firmly as she can manage, but its noticeable she can't manage to hold her , she reaches other end of room, quickly grabs back of chair for support. Other guests busy talking, some drinking, and some eating, Mable speaking to guests, Mrs. Coby is on the verge of collapse as she watches Jean. Steve whispers to her, hold on, don't make matters worse. Nance walks over to Jean.)

Nance — You look so tired dear.

Jean — I am -- I -- I'm --- wish I could -- go in without hu -- hurting yo -- your feelings mother.

Mrs. B. — Without hurting my feelings? Why that would certainly be impardonable. I've told nearly everyone here, how wonderfully you play.

Jean — I -- I'm -- re -- really sorry mother, b -- but --

Mrs. B. — Now you just can't, you can't treat me like this. I've relied surely on you, for the entertaining part, you can't spoil the evening.

Jean — Bu -- but -- I -- I'm sure, I-- I will greatly dis -- disappoint you -- your guests if I play.

Mrs. B. You let them be the best judge of that. (She turns to guests) Ladies and Gentlemen, Mrs. Blackford will entertain us with a few selections at the piano. I'm sure she will choose something that will please you all. (Jean looks at Nance, Mrs. Coby looks at Steve, and Marvin is talking to Ted. Jean takes a few steps, stops).

Nance. (To Jean) Your ankle. I warned you not to wear these high heels to-night.

Marvin (Turns around) What's wrong Jean?

Nance Oh nothing serious, her ankle, she sprained it a little this morning, and I warned her not to wear those high heels to-night.

Jean (Smiles) Its nothing -- I -- (Marvin looks at her, sees at once she's intoxicated. Jean reaches the piano, with difficulty, sits down, begins to play. She plays the first few bars pretty well, but, then try as she will, she can't play any more correctly.

Mrs. B. Why what's the trouble Jean?

Jean I -- I -- er -- don't -- e -- ever -- pu -- play we -- well without -- without music.

Mrs. B. Why there's any amount of music there. (Jean rises, looks over some music, takes a sheet places it, is about to be seated on piano stool, misses it, and would fall to the floor, but Steve stands near, catches her, places her on stool )

Jean (Laughs) Almost --- Tho -- those little stools. I'm not -- I'm -- I'm not u -- used to them. (She runs her fingers over keys.)

Steve That's right mother, we really must have a bench.(Guests are all gazing at Jean suspiciously. Some of them are whispering to each other. Marvin, Nance, Steve and Mrs. Coby are watching with breathless anxiety. Jean begins to play, but she can manage no more than a few bars correctly, tries again, and again, but fails, turns to Mrs. B. )

Jean I -- I -- t -- to -- told -- yo -- you, I -- I'd dis -- disa -- disappoint your guests.

Mrs. B. (In diliberate tone) Disappoint them? I think you shocked them. (Jean looks at Mrs. B.)

Jean We -- well-- you-your -- not shocked -- your -- your -- ha -- happy --(she rises, holds on to piano for support, she now trembles with hatred and anger.) You -- you've reached th -- the -- height of -- of your am -- ambition. Y -- your sceme is -- is a -- is a w -- wonderful success, is -- is'nt it? (She takes a deep breath) I -- I'm drunk, bu -- but not so drunk that I -- I co -- couldn't see ho -- how you- you planned to bring -- to bring this about. Y -- you -- win -- you -- you've shwon your -- your son, ho -- how hi -- his wife could dis -- disgrace him, (She staggers over to her mother - in -law, no -- now ain't you happy? (She laught hysterically, go -- go -- on laugh -- laugh be- be merry, you -- you've go -- got ju -- just what you -- you wanted. G -- go -- on. (She turns to guests) La- laugh -- laugh all of you -- we -- well -- wh -- why don't yo -- you. (A pause) Oh-- I -- I -- se you -- you'll -- wa -- wait ti -- till -- my back is turned. (She gasps) Al -- alright -- th -- then. I'll ---- Oh for Gods sake Aunt Clara take me -- home. (Aunt Clara takes a few steps toward Jean, but Marvin

reaches her first, he takes her in his arms, she lowers her head a few moments, then slowly looks up at him, as he patts her gently. She bursts into a fit of hysterical crying as he leads her from room.

CURTAIN

## ACT THREE

The next morning about 7 o'clock.

Scene same as act one.

Shades are drawn. A low light from a table lamp. Marvin is pacing up and down the room, stops a moment in deep thought, begins his pace again for a few moments, then walks slowly over to chair near table, sits down, taps his fist nervously and continuously for a few moments, he is staring out into space as if the air could help to advise him, enter Mrs. Coby attired in hanging robe, she stands looking at Marvin, shakes her head, Marvin does not see her.

Mrs. C. (In low tone) Poor boy, how I pity him, (she walks slowly over to Marvin's chair) You promised you would go to bed.

Marvin (Startled) I can't sleep Aunt Clara, so what's the use.

Mrs. C. The rest would do a <u>little</u> good.

Marvin (Smiling sarcastically)(Then sighs) Rest? Can my brain get any rest? (In tone of dispair) Oh, Aunt Clara, is there something <u>you could</u> suggest.

Mrs. C. I <u>could</u> suggest to God.

Marvin What would you ask God to do Aunt Clara?

Mrs. C. I would ask him (she closes her eyes) Oh its a dreadful thing to say, but its the only thing that would bring her peace, -- death.

Marvin (In shocked tone) <u>You</u> -- would ask God to take her?

Mrs. C. I love her, I would rather see her dead than see her again as I did last night.

Marvin No -- no -- not that --- I'm going to fight to keep her as long as I can, but Aunt Clara, have you stoped to think of the fate of her child.

Mrs. C. I've thought, and thought, and thought -- my boy, and I'm still at sea the same as if there were no land.

Marvin I've been at sea too, Aunt Clara, but during the night I landed. Of course the land I found is pretty rough, It will take all the courage and will-power I possess, to even it out.

Mrs. C. (In axious tone) You've hit upon some plan Marvin, What is it?

Marvin I'm going to send our baby to a nunery.

Mrs. C. To a nunery? For how long?

Marvin Forever.

Mrs. C. (In tone of horror) Oh you couldn't, you couldn't do such a heartless thing.

Marvin Just a few moments ago you said you would rather see Jean dead than see her suffer as she did last night. Isn't it more than likely that innocent little child will grow up --- No -- no -- I'd save her from that terrible fate if I were condemned to die for it.

Mrs. C. (In tone of dispair) You mean you will take our baby and -- and --- we'll never see her again?

Marvin Its the only way Aunt Clara, the only way.

Mrs. C. Its cruel to take a baby from its mother.

Marvin Its damnable to see a baby walk straight into a lion's den without reaching out a hand to save it.

Mrs. C. But there might be a chance the child would take a different direction.

Marvin You wouldn't take that chance with a child, you know you wouldn't.

Mrs. C. Suppose Jean doesn't consent?

Marvin I think she will, in fact I'm sure she will. The greatest sacrifices on earth are made by mothers.

Mrs. C. (sighs) That's very true, but I'wouldn't for all the world to be you, when you ask her --

Marvin I'm not going to ask her.

Mrs. C. (shocked) You're not going to ask her? Surely you won't take her flesh and blood away from her without her consent.

Marvin Now stop to think, wouldn't it be easier for one condemned to die to be cloroformed while they sleep.

Mrs. C. The dead never awaken, but Jean will and find her baby is gone.

Marvin She will be spared the worst of it, the parting, (he closes his eyes), and because I know you would give your own life to save her some pain, I know your going to help.

Mrs. C. How can I help?

Marvin You must take our baby to a nunery at once before Jean awakes.

Mrs. C. (Shocked) What, now? Why not give yourself another day to think it over, you may change your mind.

Marvin That's just why she's going now, Last nights scene is fresh on my mind, its given me the courage, that may never come again, and that poor innocent child mustn't fall into that hell, because her father was weak. Please -- please Aunt Clara don't prolong my misery.

Mrs. C. (Excitedly) Wh -- what do you want me to do?

Marvin (Takes check bood, writes out check)(as he hands check to Mrs. C.) Give this to the nurse. It pays her for two months instead of one, tell her to leave as quitely as possible. When she's gone, wrap

the baby, (Dreadful pain is depicted on his face) up warm, I'll telephone to the garage for a car, I don't want the chauffeur to know just where your going.

Mrs. C. IIm going to do this because I know your doing it at the expense of your life's happiness. So it must be right, but (she weeps) its such a painful duty.

Marvin I know it, but there's no sacrifice too great for one we love, and we both love her.

Mrs. C. Have you decided where you want me to take her?

Marvin No -- take her where you think best. Tell the MotherSuperior the truth. Tell her to teach my child how to be happy loving God, and doing good, and some day I may look at my child from a distance wearing the veil that will keep her safe from -- (he clenches his hand) Oh my God -- Aunt Clara please --- please -- get it over -- (He draws a deep breath. Mrs. C. sobbing goes to door)

Mrs. C. I'll hurry it as much as possible. Ring for a car (she walks out) (Marvin paces up and down the room again, enter Steve slowly, Marvin does not see him until he stands facing him.)

Marvin (looking up surprised.) How did you get in?

Steve I got Stanley to give me his key last night. I want to speak to you before any of them come down.

Marvin You came to advise me?

Steve Yes, if you'll think my plans a good one, why alright. If not, there's nothing lost byt a few minutes time to listen.

Marvin Go ahead lets hear it.

Steve Why not take Jean and the baby to California.

Marvin You seem to think the change of climate will cure her?

Steve — No, but there you could at least hold up your head , no one would know.

Marvin — (Laughs bitterly) You mean no one would know for a little while, then, it would mean to being ridiculed and ostracized in two turns instead of one.

Steve — But something must be done,(Marvin goes to phone takes up receiver, calls up a small town number, then looks at Steve.) Its being done now. Yes, hello, can you send a well heated car -- yes -- right now -- yes -- yes, Mr. Blackford -- no -- Mr. Marvin Blackford. Yes ---good-by. (Hangs up receiver. )

Steve — what's the idea? Your car's alright.

Marvin — I don't want the chauffeur to know where its going.

Steve — Where who's going? (Marvin looks at Steve)

Marvin — (Under excited and nervous strain) Now look here Steve, I'm doing something that I know you and the rest of them will find fault with -- but -- its my wife -- my child, and my own life, I'm dealing with, and I want no interference.

Steve — (Goes over to his brother, places hand on his shoulder) Your excited old boy -- your all in -- I would find fault with anything you'd do, you never did anything wrong in your life, you wouldn't begin now. Let me help you Marvin, I'll do anything you ask me to.

Marvin — (Trembling) Then stay with me until its over, but just promise me you wont let me weaken.

Steve — How can I promise something I know nothing about.

Marvin — That's right I must tell you -- (He draws a deep breath) Aunt Clara is taking the baby to a nunery-- I'll never see my child again.

Steve (Startled as if from a sudden blow) Great -- God -- (He looks at brother - a pause) I -- I -- understand but, but -- why never see her again?

Marvin The child must never know she has a home or a parent to come to. She will be taught to be happy there just the same as a blind child is taught to be happy in darkness.

Steve Then your -- giving your child away.

Marvin I'm saving her -- and perhaps many more innocent souls that would come in the future generation -- from a hell pit.

Steve Why don't you at least wait until Mr. Olsen returns from Europe. He might be able to advise you.

Marvin (Smiles bitterly) Advise me, why --- didn't he advise himself -- why didn't he tell Jean the truth when she was old enough to understand? (sound of auto horn is heard. Marvin walks to window, pulls up shade, looks out, then walks back to table.)

Steve I quite agree with you, he should have told her, but nine chances out of ten if you came along and proposed to her, and she told you the truth, you'd laugh at it and look at her, and laugh again, you wouldn't think it was possible that a lovely creature like Jean, would ever become -- a -- well now what's the use its too late to remedy, and if you've got the courage to part with your child, it may be the about the best thing that can be done to protect that child and the generations that would follow, but take my advice Marvin and wait, wait until Mr. Olsen returns. Its only fair.

Marvin (In agitated tone) I <u>can't</u> wait, I'm weakening now with last nights performance still dancing before my eyes. In a few days or a few weeks, my courage may leave me -- (he stops to listen,

hears someone coming down through the hall. Silence a few mmments- the sound of a door closing is heard. Marvin takes a deep breath, goes to window, looks out then covers his face with his hands Sound of auto horn is heard, Marvin again looks out of window. Than raises window, and looks out, sound of Auto horn is heard again indicating its moving out. Marvin's eyes follow the car from the window until its out of his sight, then he throws his arm against the side of window and head upon his arm.((A deep sob) (Steve is looking at his brother, grief depicted on his face. Curtain for two minutes indicating elapse of two hours.

## ACT 3. SCENE 2.

Same as scene 1. Steve seated on couch in deep thought, enter Mable

**Mable** You sneaked out pretty early, but I sort of imagined where you've gone (she goes over to Steve sits on his knee embraces him) Your the right stuff brother, I'm so proud of you.

Steve I'm glad of that, I wonder if Nance is?

Mable You don't suppose she fell in love with your good looks or your little little bald spot? You must have done an awful lot of good in this world to be rewarded with a girl like Nance.

Steve I'm not so sure about me being so good, but I <u>am</u> sure <u>she's</u> one in a million.

Mable You can say it again.(she rises) I've got a little surprise for you.

Steve If its good, lets hear it. If it isn't, bottle it up for another time, there's enough trouble around here to last us for a while.

Mable How is she?

Steve I haven't seen her yet, but, --- lets hear about the surprise.

Mable I just left Teddy out side, he -- wouldn't come in, and of course under the circumstances I didn't coax him.

Steve What's that got to do with the surprise.

Mable Everything, he proposed to me.

Steve (In joyous tone) Well --- that's good news, I'm right glad.

Mable Are you? I'm not.

Steve (In shocked tone) Your not? Well -- who -- the -- devil will ever understand a girl. We all thought you were in love with him.

Mable I am.

Steve You are -- you love him so much that your sorry he proposed to you.

Mable Exactly. Do you think I', going to marry a man just because he's sorry for me.

Steve Sorry for you?

Mable Yes. You know Madge Dillon, my college chum, lives with them, She told me just what happened, the minute after it happened. One of the village gossips got his mother on the phone this morning, and the conversation ran something like this: Too bad Mrs. ---- you were sick and couldn't come to the Blackford affair. (Mable's tone now sarcastic.) Yes --- scandalous -- simply scandalous, and then of course Teddy's mother and sister got the story from A-to-Z. Not a particle missing and a whole lot added on.

Steve But why should Teddy be sorry for you. Its Jean that needs sympathy, not you.

Mable (Shakes her head) Your as thick as mud -- don't you see its all in the family. The first think his mother said was, well Teddy I think that ought to spoil your appetite for the Blackford's. You see they

never dreamed it was Nance he was after, they have an Idea, Nance is no one, from no where. They always thought it was me, and they didn't want me either. They want to keep Ted at home as long as they can, but the darn fool went at it the wrong way. They should have said, Mable's a fine girl Ted, why don't you marry her. They'd have been safe then. I'd have been the bestgirl in the world he'd marry.

Steve Well that doesn't sound as if he's sorry for you, it sounds more like he wants to marry you to spite his mother and sister..

Mable If I thought that I'd marry him this minute.

Steve Why you've just said so yourself. If his mother and sister had said marry Mable, Mable would be the last girl he'd marry.

Mable Yes, that's true, but I know Ted. He's find, he thinks I'm an innocent victim and he's sorry for me. I know he is, w - why -- why would he propose the very next morning (she stops short, takes a deep breath --) Oh well, after last night. Don't say anything to Marvin about this, please don't.

Steve Of course not, but listen sis, you know terribly wretched and unfortunate Marvin is. It lies in the palm of your hands now to bring a little of sunshine into his life.

Mable How?

Steve By telling him your going to marry Ted.

Mable (Stops to think) I -- understand -- but, (enter Marvin, Mable goes over kisses him.)

Marvin (Looking down at Mables feet,) did you wear rubbers Mable. Its storming out.

Mable Yes, I left them in the hall. (Marvin goes to window looks out.)

Marvin (In nervous tone) Looks like the storm's going to continue.

Mable Yes, but it needn't worry us. Nobody in the family is out,(she goes over to Marvin puts her arm around his neck) Don't lose your grip brother. She's a lot more to be pitied than blamed, I hope , in fact I'm sure you think my way.

Marvin (Pats her gently on the shoulder) Run along home dear before the storm gets any worse.

Mable I can see you want to get rid of me, but I don't mind, I suppose you've got a lot of things to talk about. I'll go, but -- that glum look is going to leave your face for a few minutes or --- come now -- all attention, good news on the tip of my tongue.

Marvin (sighs) What good news can there be for me now?

Mable (Looking steadily at Marvin) Teddy has asked me to marry him.

Marvin (In joyful tone) Well sis, that sure <u>is</u> good news.

Mable You were afraid the scandal-mongers would spoil my future?

Marvin Yes, that's a great load off my mind.

Mable I'm so glad, and now have faith and courage and perhaps, everything <u>will</u> come out alright (she presses his hand firmly kisses him and walks out.)

Marvin That's the best piece of news I've heard in a long time.

Steve Its great -- it sure is. (Marvin goes to window)

Marvin Looks like the beginning of a blizzard. I wonder if Aunt Clara had the baby bundled up warm enough.

Steve You talk like a fool you know she wouldn't take a least chance.

Marvin Yes, of course, but that sotrm came up very suddenly.

Steve Aunt Clara would keep that baby warm if she had to take off her own wraps to do it.

Marvin I know that, but I wish she had tact enough to phone when she got there.

Steve (smiles) Aunt Clara is about the best woman I know, but when it comes to tact , -- well content yourself with this, she wont let any harm come to that baby while she's conscious.(enter Thora)

Thora The nurse, she no bane come to her breakfast yet, mab be the baby she ban sick.

Marvin Its alright Thora, the nurse's gone to town.

Thora (Surprised) Gone to town, and it bane so snowing? She done never get back to-day, look yust like a blizzard.(Marvin looks at Steve, alarm depicted in his face. Thora goes to door, turns.) Don't you goin to eat any breakfast dis morning Mr. Blackford?

Marvin I'll take a cup of strong coffee Thora, bring it in here please.

Thora Yes sir, I vill. Von't you please take a lettle bit toast mit you coffee?

Marvin No, Thora.

Thora Alright sir, (sighs walks out.)

Steve Did Nance get any sleep?

Marvin Very little.

Steve Does she know?

Marvin Yes.

Steve What does she think of it?

Marvin The same as the rest of you, that Jean should have been told. (In impatient tone) but only the parent knows the torture of being compelled to part with their child. If the whole world said I did wrong I would still feel sure I did right.

Steve Where's Nance now?

Marvin Gone to her room. She asked not to be disturbed unless its absolutely necessary. (he sighs) She's pretty much all in, and I'm not surprised. (Enter Thora with tray and coffee, places tray on table.)

Thora You like your coffee hot sir, so done let him stand too long.

Marvin Alright Thora. (Thora walks out. Marvin walks over to tray.) Have a cup Steve?

Steve You know I'm not crazy about coffee.I'll run back and take care of my mail. I'll come in later on again, but if anything turns up if you need me, don't hesitate, call up, I'll come right over.

Marvin Thanks old boy, I'll take advantage of that offer -- if necessary. (Steve goes to door) Take a pair of my rubbers, you'll find some in the hall.

Steve By the way, where's Stanley?

Marvin He was up all night, I sent him to bed just before you came in.

Steve You can fully rely on Stanley?

Marvin Absolutely, I'll wager, he'd give up his life to help Jean.

Steve Well, lets hope for the best. Try and get a little sleep,(Steve walks out) (Marvin pours his coffee, takes a sip. Through absolute stillness, comes the sounds of terrific winds, one window is partly open at top, Marvin places cup on tray goes over to window closes it, then stands gazing out.)(enter Jean attired in dressing gown) (She stands lookint at Marvin, his back is turned to her, then she slowly walks over to him takes his hand. He starts, takes her in his arms leads her to couch. They sit down)

Jean Why is the nursery door locked dear.

Marvin (Thinks quickly) There's something wrong with a hindge. The door wont stay shut unless its locked.

Jean Baby must be asleep, there's not a sound in the room.

Marvin (Nervously) I suppose so, (He looks over at tray) There's some nice strong coffee, shall I pour a cup for you?

Jean I had some early this morning, Nance brought it up to me.(she looks into Marvin's eyes) There's something you want to ~~tell~~ say dear, -- if its going to be a lecture,-- please don't , I really couldn't stand it.

Marvin I wont -- in fact I've made up my mind, never to lecture you again.

Jean I understand, you come to the conclusion its no use; I don't blame you in the least, I know I'm just a lying worthless drunkard.

Marvin You misunderstand me dear, I'm thing perhaps you would do better without being lectured.

Jean (sighs, shakes her head sadly) I don't think I'll every do very much better. Oh -- don't look at me like that, don't you suppose I've tried? You'll never know how hard I've tried. I've called myself the vilest things, I've classed myself with lowest beasts, and I prayed to God help me to become a human being once again.

Marvin you don't know what your saying dear.

Jean Oh yes I do, I know I started out all wrong, when I had every chance in the world to go right. I heard two distinct voices; One said, don't touch it, if you value yourself respect, the other said, what respect have you got, If you can't trust yourself, I know now it was God that said don't. It was the devil that said do, and I listened to the devil. I'm convinced now that it was just that way, for everytime you or Dad or Aunt Clara would plead with me and make me promise I wouldn't touch a drop, at least for that day, nothing - nothing on earth could keep me from it. Something within me, would draw me to ~~take~~ that bottle,

as if I were a piece of steel and the bottle a heap of magnate. That something was the devil, When I defied God, when I took my first drink to show him I was master, I opened the door for the devil to get in and he's there to stay, he's in the blood.

**Marvin** But Jean dear you've got me,----

**Jean** (sighs) Yes, I've got you and baby, I ought to be thankful for that. (Marvin trembles at the word baby. Silence a few moments.) What are you think of dear?

**Marvin** (Nervously) I -- I -- I've had a lot of time to think during the night and ---

**Jean** And what?

**Marvin** And the baby --- somehow the baby's future seemed to crop up and force itself before my eyes.

**Jean** I understand ---- Do you suppose I haven't thought of that?

**Marvin** I'm sure you have, but you haven't suggested anything.

**Jean** What is there to suggest now, she's only an infant.

**Marvin** That's the time to begin dear. The Japanese lady must have small feet, so the're bound up at birth, then they are quite sure the feet will never grow large.

**Jean** What can we bind up in our baby, to keep her from becoming a drunkard when she grows up.

**Marvin** That all depends on how much her mother would be willing to sacrifice for her.

**Jean** You know, I'd sacrifice everything for her, at a moments notice I'd give my life, of course its a pretty rotten life, but I'd take torture with it, if it could do her some good .(Marvin is looking at Jean steadily) (Jean sees Marvin is in a predicament) There's something up your sleeve Marvin, you thought ou some plan, tell it to me.

Marvin Jean -- you just mentioned torture. If -- if we decide that our child must be spared from a fate like yours - It will mean torture for both of us.

Jean (In alarmed tone) Marvin what are you thinking of?

Marvin Of our child.

Jean (In tone of terror) Th -- that means --

Marvin It means, that we must give her up. (at these words Jean jumps up)

Jean (Cries out) Marvin!

Marvin You just said you'd take torture to spare your child.

Jean Bu -- but she's my baby, you don't think for a moment I'd -- Oh my God, Marvin, you can't be sane. The humiliation of last night, must have turned your brain.

Marvin The humiliation of last night was a God send, it gave me the courage.

Jean (Now almost terror stricken) The courage? The courage to do what?

Marvin The courage to part with my child.

Jean (Throws her arms around her husband's neck) Oh Marvin don't tell me your really in earnest, that you would take my baby away from me.

Marvin (Closing his eyes. ) Don't, for heavens sake, dontlet me think for a moment your not a self sacrificing mother.

Jean I'm more than willing to sacrifice my life (In trembling tone of horror and fear ) If I'm in the way, if with her mother, will do her the least harm, why my life isn't worth a straw, I could, and would put myself out of the way, without a moments hesitation, but she, my innocent little baby, why send her from the home and father that justly belongs to her, why take her from a love like yours and Aunt Clara's and Nance, and give her to a stranger who at their best can love like a stranger.

Oh Marvin don't do it, Please don't. Its cruel --- so terribly cruel. (In deep pitiful pleading tone) I'll do anything else you will ask of me, anything that will help the situation, no matter how cruel it will be, no matter how great the torture willbe, but, my baby musn't suffer. Tell me you -- you wont do it dear, for God's sake tell me you wont.

Marvin. Calm yourself dear, your nerves have got the best of you. (He takes her in his arms) Come lets sit down again. (He leads her to couch, they sit down, but Jean is continuously looking into her husband's eyes, and is trembling with nervous expectation. )

Jean What ever in the world put such a terrible idea into your head.

Marvin Nothing on earth is as terrible as your affliction, and yet your willing to take a chance with your child. Stop to think dear, Virginius killed his daughter to save her from disgrace.

Jean (Her eyes open wide, intense terror is now depicted on her face) I -- I -- can -- see -- your mind's made up. Nothing on earth will change it.

Marvin Don't you see dear, your making it terribly hard for me. I love my baby, perhaps just as deeply as you do, I'd want her here perhaps just as much as you do, but I know there's only one way to save her and that is, to remove her from this big and rotten world, into a little clean and charitable one.

Jean (Whispers) as she closes her eyes) The nunery.

Marvin (Repeats) The nunery, there she will see and hear nothing that is unclean. There she will be taught from infancy, that the little world she lives in, is far superior to the world outside. She'll be happy like a little gold fish in a little bowl.

Jean — Your right -- I know how deeply you love that baby, It will no doubt be just as painful to you as it will be to me, to part with her -- but I'm beginning to see. (she stops short, ) Marvin, you looked so strange when I told you the nurcery door was locked, (Marvin looks downward),and everything in there seemed so terribly quiet ---- loook at me, Is the baby in that room? (A pause -- then)

Marvin — (Whispers) No.

Jean — (Covers her face with her hands, for a few seconds, then slowly drops her hands into lap gazing into space)

Marvin — (In tone of dispair) I did what I believed was best for you.

Jean — (A sob) I know you thought it practical, but --( a sob) it was too terribly practical.

Marvin — It smared you the pain of parting.

Jean — (Smiling sadly) It filled my heart with a longing that only God himself can understand. I'd be crucified this moment, just to be able to kiss those little hands once again (she rises)(A deep sigh) I'm sorry dear, I didn't mean to reproach you, (a sob) I know -- its because you love me too well -- (a sob) but oh -- I can't -- I can't, I'm not strong enough to bear it. (Marvin is still seated, his hands clapsed, his face depicting intense grief. She sobs quitely as she walks out of the room. Silence a few moments, then enter Nance, walks over to Marvin, sits down beside him. Marvin looks up at Nance.)

Marvin — (Sighs) Its all over Nance.

Nance — Yes, I know.

Marvin — I wonder if I did the thing right after all.

Nance — Its done now Marvin, and right or wrong, we all know you did what you thought best for Jean. (Marvin rises goes to window.

Marvin — (In desperate tone) Everything - everything is against me, even the weather. I'm in mortal dread now that the car might stuck in the sotrm, and Aunt Clara and the baby might be in danger.

Nance — The chauffeur would have sense enough to take them to the nearest house. No one would refuse a lady and a baby shelter in a storm like this.

Marvin — How do we know they can get to a house.

Nance — Now why borrow trouble, be patient a little longer, perhaps --- (she looks out of window) why here comes Mable. (Marvin looks out again.

Marvin — /She can scarcely see her way through the drifts, (He rushes to door. )I'll run out to get her. (he rushes out. Nance calls after him)

Nance — Don't go without a coat. (she looks out of window anxiously a few moments, then goes to door, as Marvin and Mable enter. Mable is puffing and wiping her eyes) Why what on earth brought you out in a weather like this?

Mable — Whew -- It sure is some weather.(turns to Marvin) Do you know your wire is on the bum?

Marvin — Is it? I haven't tried. (he goes over to phone.)

Mable — You needn't try it because every body else has, Its plump dead. I suppose the storm did it. What did Aunt Clara go to town for? (Marvin and Nance exchange glances.)

Marvin — To town?

Mable — Well she didn't say where she was phoning from, but I imagined it must be from town.

Marvin — (Impatiently) Well - well - what did she say?

Mable She said she tried several times to get you, but couldn't. Then she realized the storm had something to do with it, so she rang us and ---

Marvin Well for heavens sake Mable, tell us what she said.

Mable She just said to tell you that everytning is O.K. , but she's going to stay where she is over night on account of the storm. (Marvin breathes a sigh of relief.)

Mable Where did she go Marvin?

Marvin What makes you so inquisitive?

Mable I'm not inquisitive, I just wanted to know -- be -- be - cause (she looks sheepishly at Nance) I know how glad she'll be to hear about Ted and me.

Nance Ted -- and you? What?

Mable We were engaged this morning.

Nance (Throws her arms around Mable, kisses her) For heavens sake Mable, if its a dream don't let me wake up.

Mable Its no dream Nance, its you he's in love with, but its me he's going to marry. I'll have a pretty tough job convincing him how foolish he was to love you and how clever he was to marry me, but its got to be done. (they laugh)

Nance There's nothing in the world I'd want to hear more than Ted saying, Nance what a fool I was to love you, where a girl like Mable was around.

Mable I know Nance, how happy this made you and everyone else in the family. The question is now how happing is he going to be?

Nance It lies in your hands Mable, as happy as you'll make him, and I know you can and you will succeed.

Mable (sighs) I hope so, I'm going to try darn hard, (she goes to door)

**Marvin** Your not going back in this weather.

**Mable** I sure am -- I left Ted at the house. He offered to bring the message, but I didn't care to tell him what the message was, and --- I thought perhaps, you -- wouldn't care to see him this morning. I told him I'll be back in a few minutes.

**Marvin** I'll take you over.

**Mable** You don't have to , just watch me from the window, If you see me blown away, you can run out and catch me, no, really its alright. Its not so bad now, I'll be home in a jiffy.

**Marvin** Come along, I'll take you across.

**Mable** Well of course. Its no use arguing with you. No one will ever change <u>your</u> mind ( she goes to door) Oh by the way there was someone else on the wire after Aunt Clara called. A man's voice. All I could get was Hello, this is -- and then -- zip went the wire. I think it was some one trying to get you.

**Marvin** Perhaps -- and then it might have been some one for Steve, well who ever it was he'll have to have patients.

**Mable** Any one that ever tried getting numbers in this burg knows that patients is a virtue.(They walk out.)(Nance looks out of window a few moments. Thenturns goes to door leading to other room, comes face to face with Thora)

**Thora** How bane Mrs. Blackford feel now?

**Nance** Much better Thora.

**Thora** (As she takes up tray) I bane take some breakfast to her?

**Nance** No, Thora not justyet. She had a cup of coffee, and doesn't want anything else.

Thora — You bane try and make her eat yust a lettle bit sometings, maybe a lettle piece knocker brod mid nice lettle piece cheese.

Nance — I'll coax her.

Thora — (As she goes to door.) Do dot please she moost eat sometings. (exit Thora. Nance goes to window, looks out, enter Marvin)

Marvin — It isn't raining so hard now, but the wind is terrible .

Nance — Yes, its drifting now.

Marvin — Wasn't it luckly for us Aunt Clara got that message across before the wire went bad.

Nance — I should say it <u>was</u> luckly, especially that she couldn't get home. Now marvin, take my advice and lie down al least for a little while. Jean will need you a lot now. You must keep up your strength.

Marvin — My poor unfortunate Jean.

Nance — You've given up all hope?

Nance — xxxxxxxx

Marvin — Yes.

Nance — It was really too bad Mr. Olsen had to go to Europe. I can't help imagining he would have a <u>little</u> influence over her.

Marvin — She was drinking for some time before he left.

Nance — Yes, but some how when he was around, she never got beyond control. Its too bad they were so persistant over there, just when Jean needed him most.

Marvin — We can hardly blame them. His mother is very old. She came here on a visit, before Jean was born, and stayed until the baby was three months old. She has never seen her son since.Aunt Clara's been across twice since then.

Nance Its surprising she didn't remain in America with her children.

Marvin I understand they tried very hard to keep her, but couldn't succeed. Sweden seemed to be the only place on earth fit to live in. A lot of intellectual Swedes feel thatway.

Nance Does she know anything -- about Jean.

Marvin Not unless Mr. Olsen told her, and I don't think he would tell her, now that she's so old.

Nance I suppose not, and that accounts for her insisting that he must come to her. Lets quit thinking about the whole affair for at least a little while, come on, be sensible, go to your room, and take a good long rest. I'll look after Jean.

Marvin I needn't tell you how to try and devert her mind.

Nance I'll do my best.

Marvin That means your not so sure ---- you'll succeed.

Nance (shakes her head) No.

Marvin (sighs, walks slowly out of the room.)

Nance (Walks to window looks out, then turns stands still thinking deeply. Enter Jean look unusually pale and haggard, she looks at Nance, sees she's in deep thought.)

Jean What are you thinking of Nance?

Nance (Startled) Oh nothing very much dear.

Jean (sighs) Your right, you were thinking of me.

Nance Now look here Jean, you've got to loose those pessimistic notions of your. It doesn't make things any better for you.

Jean (smiles sadly) I doesn't make them any worse, it simply wouldn't be any worse.

Nance I know dear -- I know, but you've both done such a wonderfull thing.

Jean (In distracted tone) Don't give me credit for something you know I'm to blame for. I'm responsible for that dear little life I've completely ruined. Oh yes, I'm quite sober now. I see it all. I'm the cause of this terrible ship wreck. Oh Nance its too terrible.Its come to a climax that would break even a heart of iron.

Nance (Taking Jean in her arms) It appears so dreadful dear because the wound is deep and very fresh, but in time --- time is a healer --

Jean Time will never heal my wounds, because my conscience will allow it, never as long as I will live. I will always see that dear little face, not happy and smiling, but with tears streaming down its little cheeks, and think of it Nance, if I were alive in years to come, I would constantly hear her voice, She would say -- you did it -- you did it. (She covers her face with hands) Oh no, that time must never come,(I'm determined tone) It will never come.

Nance (Beginning to understand.)(In terrified tone) Jean only cowards die by their own hands. Their too cowardly to live the life that God ordained for them. They don't stop to think of the great beyond where suicides, in other words cowards, are not admitted.

Jean Then I've got to choose between a tortured life, and a cowards death -- well I'm going to think it over now, while I'm fully sober, Leave me to myself a little while wont you Nance.

Nance I will,if you give me your promise not to do anything rash.

Jean I promise. (Nance looks at Jean a few moments.)

Nance Jean, I could find sympathy in my heart for a thief or a drunkard of the worst sort, but not for a coward. (Nance goes to door) If you should feel your back bone slipping, think of what I said. (she walks out) (Jean sits down, is now in deep thought. A few moments silence then she rises, goes to window pulls it down a few inches, wind howls, but Jean takes no notice, she walks back to chair sits down, in deep thought ~~again~~ once more. A few moments elaps again. Enter Stanley)

Stanley Its quite cold in here Miss Jean, and the wind is terrific. Shall I close the window.

Jean (Looks up) It was very close in here a few moments ago, you can close it now. (Stanley closes window.)

Stanley we haven't had a wind storm like this in years. Have we?

Jean No --- Stanley do you know? -----

Stanley About the baby? (He looks at her a moment) Yes -- I know. It ~~Xxxxx~~ is a fortunate thing they reached the place --- before the storm was at its height.

Jean Yes, ( in slow expectant tone) You -- think it -- was a -- wise thing to do?

Stanley Well I don't know whether it was altogether wise, but you know Mr. Blackford did it at the expense of his own life's happiness.

Jean He did it because he sees I'm unfit, Do you think Stanley, that after I'm gone, he would bring her back.

Stanley (Looking downward) Well -- Miss Jean --- that's pretty hard to answer.

Jean Why?

Stanley Be -- because -- I -- I'd prefer not to answer that question.

Jean — After all these years Stanley, after watching me grow up from babyhood to womanhood ----

Stanley — (shaking his head sadly, ) That's why I can't answer.

Jean — You mean you can't tell me the truth because your afraid I ---- ( a moments pause) Don't be afraid Stanley. I need the truth now so much. (In tone of great distress) I can't get it from any one --- but you Stanley, --- you must give me the truth, you will, because I ask you for it. You never refused anything I asked of you, you can't refuse this.

Stanley — If you had asked me for a loaded gun or a carvin knife, I wouldn't have given it to you, in fact I wouldn't give you anything that would do you harm.

Jean — (A deep sigh) I understand now the question is fully answered. You know my baby will come back after I'm gone.

Stanley — (In tone of terror) Miss Jean ! -------

Jean — Don't be a fool Stanley. Its not a gun or a carving knife you handed me, you gave me something God refused to give me ( her eyes open wide her actions depict the greatest grief mingled with determination) courage (she looks at Stanley) -- to hope for death instead of fearing it. It -- will come soon, wont it Stanley?

Stanley — (Sadly) I'm afraid it will -- Miss Jean.

Jean — (Herysterically) Afraid? Why Stanley, think of all the wonderful things my death brings, first of all my baby, back to the home where she belongs, second, peace for my poor husband once again, and for me, released from a bondage that could never come on earth. Can death come too soon for all this?

Stanley My poor little girl, there's no use trying to make you believe that I don't agree with you. I know you're too clever for that. I can only say, may God give you the courage you need. (The wind is making a wailing sound.) I don't think Mr. Blackford will get much sleep with that wind blowing./The windows rattle up there like they were ready to blow out.

Jean Can nothing be done to keep them from rattling, he needs a little sleep.

Stanley Indeed he does. I'll try sticking a piece of card board between the ledges, that may help a little. (he walks out.)

Jean (Sits down, a pause) The baby will come back. Marvin will have peace once again --- and --- for -- me -- (enter Thora)

Thora Aint it sometings you vould like to eat Mrs. Blackford? Yust try and tink of somethings, anyting you bane like, I make em fer you.

Jean (shakes yer head) No- Thora, not just yet, a little later perhaps.

Thora I ask you again a lettle bit later -- Yes?

Jean Alright Thora (Thora goes to door) Oh Thora, bring me -- er -- the bottle of iodine will you please?

Thora You mean not you spill on ven you hurt your finger?

Jean Yes -- I -- er ran a pin into my finger, and -- er its just as well to take precaution.

Thora Let me see him?

Jean Oh its nothing much. It hasn't bled at all.

Thora Sometimes it bane worse ven he done bleed. I'll get the what yer call him?

Jean Iodine.

Thora Io --- Alright I get him.

Jean And Thora don't say anything about it to Miss Nance. Its really nothing much to worry over,

Thora — Sure I done tell her. Its good she take a lettle bit rest. She need em. (Exit Thora)

Jean — (As she rises and feels her knees growing weak) I'm -- I'm -- agraid to die. (she grabs chair for support, stands looking out into space, a few moments enter Thora.)

Thora — (As she looks at Jean) You bane feel sick Mrs. Blackford?

Jean — (Forcing a smile) No Thora, I'm er -- there's no air in this room. Open the window a little bit.(Thora hands Jean bottle then goes to open it. Wind howls) Just a little Thora.

Thora — Yes Mrs. Blackford.(she walks to other side of room) You look like you be afraid mit sometings.

Jean — I'm alright Thora, I'm going to take a good long rest -- here in this big arm chair.

Thora — Dots right. Nobody bane come to bodder you and you could rest fine. Come I fix tne I - o - you know him. I fix it on your finger. (Jean hands her the bottle, then holds out her fore finger.) I done see vere you stick him, moost be in de inside. (she coveres tip of finger with iodine.) So, now come sit down here. (she places her on chair,is about to leave room.)

Jean — Leave tne bottle here Thora. When -- when this dries, I'll put some more on.

Thora — (as she hands Jean the bottle) I bane come back in a lettle vile and fix em again?

Jean — No Thora, I can do that myself.

Thora — Alright Mrs. Blackford, now be sure and take a nice rest. It bane so good fer you (Exit.)

Jean — (Watches Thora as she leaves the room, then looks at bottle, hands tremble. ) I could find sympathy in my heart for a thief or a drunkard, but <u>not</u> for a foward. (she stops to think a moment)

Nance is all wrong. Its not cowardly to give ones life to insure happiness for another. He'll bring the baby back. I'm sure he will -- (a pause ) but then -- suppose -- (she shudders) no that wouldn't happen. Her father will tell her the truth as soon as she's old enough to understand, she'll never marry -- then it can't happen. (she clutches the bottle tightly in her hands, trembling with fear) --- don't turn yellow Jean, its for your baby you owe it to her--(a pause -- then takes bottle to lips swallows a large part of the contents, she grabs her throat with her hands, voices are heard from the hall.) Well -- well this sure is some surprise.(Jean rises, staggers over to corner where cough is coveredby drapperies, she falls on couch, as drapperies fall back into place, she is entirely hidden from view. Voices again from hall) How did you manage it. (Enter Marvin and Mr. Olsen.)

Mr. O. I never thaught I'd get here.

Marvin I was looking out the window in my room. I saw a taxie plowing its way through the storm, when I saw it stop at this door. I couldn't imagine --- well -- if you set out to surprise us, you sure made a good job of it.

Mr. O. The real surprise is yet to come my boy. (Jean moans) What's was that?

Marvin The wind. Its been moaning that way for hours. It got on my nerves so bad a little while ago, I was almost tempted to put cotton in my ears.

Mr. O. I don't blame you. I hate a wailing wind. It sounds so spooky.

Marvin Well now I'm ready for the real surprise.

Mr. O. Where's Jean?

Marvin She's in her room, I think.

Mr. O. Your sure she's not down here.

Marvin I'm pretty sure she's in her room, the door is closed. Its always open when she's not in.

Mr. O. Well, my boy, I don't just know how your going to take this surprise, To me it came just like a thunderbolt, but when I recovered from the shock, I was glad the same as I hope you'll be. (Jean Moans) Dam that wind, its almost human.

Marvin Go on your making me very anxious.

Mr. O. Marvin, my mother came to this country in hope of separating my wife and I -- of course she didn't know we were married, but she did know of the awful fate that was waiting for us, if we did marry. She cane too late. It was about three months before Jean was born, and by that time my wife was already drinking heavily. My mother is a woman of brain and tact. She saw at once that something must be done. An Olsen must never be disgraced, She took my child to a nunery unknown to my wife and I, and in its place brought a little orphan. (Marvin gasps for breath)

Marvin And that little orphan is ---

Mr. O. Jean. (Jean moans and falls from couch to floor, her arm protruding from under the curtain. Mr. O. and Marvin stand gazing at each other a moment , then Mr. O. sees the arm and calls Marvin's attention to it. Marvin rushes over. separates curtan, Jean is lying face downward.

Marvin (Whispers) Again

Mr. O. (in shocked tone) Has it been that bad.

Marvin Yes, very often. (He picks her up, carries her to couch, at the other end of room. Mr. O. places cushion at her head, he sees brown mark on her chin.

Mr. O. What's that, Marvin, looks like a burn. (Jean opens her eyes, succeeds in getting her arm around Dad's neck.

Jean (Whispers) Dad. (Mrs. O. embraces Jean, Marvin spies bottle on floor picks it up.)

Marvin My God, its Iodine. (He rushes over to Jean) Jean -- Jean (he looks at scar) Yes she's taken it. Dad she's dying, can't you see she't dying, this -- this ( he hands Mr. O.bottle) A doctor quick, ring for a doctor.

Mr. O. (Rushes to phone,is then reminded ) Your phone's out of order, I tried it from the station, I'll get once. (He rushes out of room)

Marvin Jean dear, can't you speak to me, can't you at least tell me, its all my fault. I deserve to hear that. I derserve it.(Jean shakes her head no --)

Jean (Whispers) My baby -- is -- coming -- home. (she closes her eyes, she suffering great pain. Marvin reminded. )

Marvin Milk. (He's about to leave her side. She grabs his hand in a death clutch. She opens her eyes once again. Whispers) Baby is coming back. (she draws her last breath. Marvin sees she is dead, sinks on his knees before the couch. Head on Jean's breast. Winds wails louder than before. Marvin raises his head.)She was moaning, it sounded like -- Oh God, the sound of that wind will drive me mad.

CURTAIN.